

EAST INDIAMAN

also by Frank Pollard

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EAST INDIAMAN

BY

FRANK POLLARD

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CHAPTER I

ALL the ships in the world seemed to be congregated in the Pool of London. Lashed together in islands with their masts and spars rising like tangled forests overgrown with hempen creepers, or anchored singly, they made it almost impossible for any craft to pass up or down the river. It looked as though a monstrous shoe-horn would be necessary to prise a laden collier into a berth as she drifted up on the flood with her sails clewed up and anchor cock-a-billed.

Weaving her way in and out of the anchored shipping a wherry propelled by two watermen made a devious course towards London Bridge. In the stern two passengers conned the boat and issued orders to the rowers, to the furious resentment of the latter.

“ All right, all right,” shouted the Stroke, “ you aren’t mate of this packet, so stow your jaw. I know a damn sight more about this river than you do.”

“ Starboard a trifle,” said the younger of the passengers, who wore the uniform of a Second Mate in the Honourable East India Company’s Service.

“ Starboard my arse,” roared the Stroke.

The next moment the wherry grated against a cable and, the oars and the port side being

wrenched by the impact, collided heavily with the bow of an anchored vessel.

"It's all your doing," muttered Stroke, as he pushed clear and began rowing wildly to prevent the tide sweeping him on to another danger. "If you hadn't started playing the fool . . ."

"I want no insolence from you," replied the Mate. "I've chartered this packet, and I'll see to it she reaches port safe and sound. Starboard again."

Meditating physical violence the waterman surveyed his tormentors. The Mate was young and beefy, with a fist that looked decidedly heavy. Although his sunburnt face had a pleasant expression the waterman mistrusted the steady grey eyes which stared him out of countenance. The other passenger was a stout middle-aged gentleman with a dull purple nose set like a knob in the middle of a scarlet face. The brilliance of the gentleman's complexion was emphasised by the white bob wig and dull brown suit he was wearing.

"These unseemly and childish displays of passion heat the blood and cause costive humours," remarked the elder passenger. "In all my years of medical experience I have found that brutish, ignorant and unskilful artisans are the most prone to constipation. Therefore, my man, obey the orders of your superiors with the cheerful alacrity befitting your lowly station and your belly will benefit."

"Lowly station!" snorted the rower. "And me a licensed waterman and on the way to be a

Freeman of the Company and having a 'prentice to pull bow."

"Look where you're going," cautioned the elder passenger.

"Larboard," ordered the Mate.

"All right, I can see the brig," retorted the licensed waterman, swinging the boat round.

"She happens to be a snow," remarked the Mate, "but one can't expect a longshoreman to know one rig from another."

The licensed waterman gave a sharp order to his apprentice in the bow and then shipped his oars with great deliberation.

"Being licensed to carry passengers in my own boat and at fixed charges and not being here to be insulted and sneered at by merchant so-called sailors who think they know everything but don't know nothing and a ship's surgeon who can't be no good or he wouldn't go to sea where only them as is no good ashore ever finds their way and not intending to be bullied or put upon no matter who tries damme if I row another stroke until I get an apology due to a free-born citizen."

Having delivered himself of this ultimatum the licensed waterman folded his arms and glared at his passengers.

"Citizen!" exclaimed the Doctor. "So we have a Jacobin ruffian before us."

"And a mutinous dog as well," added the Mate. "Well, Mr. Citizen, you can either do the work you're being paid to do or go over the side. If I've got to row myself there will be no

dead weight in the boat, and I don't intend drifting broadside on to the Bridge."

The apprentice, who had taken no part in the argument, shipped his oars and started pulling when the Mate stood up and menaced the licensed waterman. With an ill grace his master did likewise, muttering to himself, but not daring to risk a fight, and possibly a capsized boat just by the rapids which flowed under the old London Bridge.

The Bridge was shot in safety, and seeing there was nothing to be got out of his passengers in the way of an apology the waterman continued to pull sulkily towards the Temple.

"Revolutionary incitements to murder and sedition of every kind increase daily," remarked the Doctor. "Now that the French have forced war on us I sincerely hope this foul disease will be stamped out at the centre of infection."

"I think we ought to thrash a nation of mutineers easily enough," replied the Mate. "At all events they won't be able to run colonies on their principles. A man who told a Brahmin all men were equal wouldn't go very far."

"Nor will they get very much rum or sugar from the West Indies, unless these demagogues intend labouring under the tropic sun themselves while their former slaves stand by and recite in unison the opinions of Tom Paine," added the Doctor.

On arriving at last at the Temple the Mate paid the exact legal fare and walked away with the Doctor amid the oaths and execrations of a dozen

or so watermen who made common cause with their insulted colleague, but dared not start a fight for fear of the East India Company.

"Do you dine at home?" asked the Doctor.

"No, it's past six o'clock now," answered the Mate. "Come and have a bite with me at a coffee house."

"As it is after dinner I think I had better go and see the friend I intend visiting at once. He will be beyond speech by eight. So, sir, your servant."

With a bow the Doctor took his leave of the Mate, who sought out a coffee house in Fleet Street where he was known. After disposing of his hat and sword the Mate made himself comfortable on a settle and called for the drawer. A pale youth with carefully dressed hair and a smart green coat bustled up.

"Good evening, Mr. Adams, sir, and what can I get for you, sir?"

"A good thick steak with green stuff topped up with bread and cheese and a quart of porter," ordered the Mate.

"At once, sir."

While waiting, the Mate read the paper. The English and Spanish were in occupation of Toulon, insurance and freights were going up on account of privateers, the French were still guillotining each other with unabated enthusiasm, and the Duke of York was going to wipe out the Republican armies in the Low Countries. The journalists were confident that within a year British Arms and British valour would subdue the

Jacobins and place the rightful heir on the throne of France. On thinking this over, the Mate decided that this was a poor aim for a war. Who cared what happened in France so long as England got the French colonies and trade ?

“ Excuse me, sir,” said the waiter, coming back to the Mate and flicking idly about with his napkin, “ but you have a lot of experience of the East Indies.”

“ Yes, Budge, I’ve been *voyages* there since I was a boy.”

“ Well now, Mr. Adams, is it easy to make a fortune there ? ” asked the waiter earnestly.

“ It’s easy enough if you’re high up in the Company’s service. Gentlemen in Council seem to pile up lacs easier than I do shillings. Oh ! There’s money enough to be made if you’re in the position to make it.”

“ And how, sir, do you get in that position ? ”

“ In the civil service you start as a writer if you have influence and interest enough to get nominated by the Court of Directors, and then you just have to keep alive long enough and you will automatically rise,” explained the Mate. “ The trouble is that you are more likely to die *young* than live until you reach a lucrative position. In the Army you start as an ensign and hope for wars and sickness to get you promotion. Or you can start as I did as a midshipman and wait until you get promoted to Commander. Then you ought to make a private fortune of at least fifty thousand pounds. But, of course, you can’t even start at

the foot of the ladder unless you can make sufficient interest to get a nomination."

"So, sir, unless you have powerful friends there is no hope?" asked the waiter with a crest-fallen expression.

"None whatever unless you know a Director or some very high personage," answered the Mate carelessly.

"It seems hard, sir," remarked the waiter.

"Oh, I don't know; the Board know who they are getting if one of their number makes the nomination," answered the Mate. "Do you want to risk fevers and dangers of India?"

"I'd rather have a fortune without them," admitted the waiter, and hustled away to get the Mate's steak.

Dusk was falling, so candles were set on the tables between the settles, while a chandelier in the passage down the centre of the room was lighted by means of a taper on the end of a pole. Customers began to arrive in ones and twos, while the Mate was attacking his food with an appetite sharpened by hunger. A general hum of conversation rose from the numerous pens, with occasional shouts which kept the waiters running to and fro. A precise-looking gentleman in a bag wig and old-fashioned three-cornered hat took his place at the table opposite the Mate and made a stiff sort of bob which was intended for a formal greeting, then shouted "Drawer." The waiter ran up somewhat breathlessly.

"A bottle of sherry and a devilled leg of chicken," ordered the precise gentleman.

"At once, sir."

"I trust not," snapped the gentleman. "I prefer having my food cooked for me, rather than being offered some re-heated remnant others have refused. Bring the bottle and a few biscuits."

"You are, sir, I take it, in the Company's service?" said the gentleman, addressing the Mate.

"I am, sir."

"Then, sir, why do you wear a uniform which the vulgar and uninstructed might mistake for a naval one?"

"Because, sir," answered the Mate politely, "it happens to be the uniform of the Service to which I belong."

"I am aware of the fact, sir, but I think such dress is better fitted to the quarter-deck than the coffee house. In short, sir, civilians should not strive to resemble warriors."

"That, sir, is a private opinion to which you are fully entitled," rejoined the Mate. "But since I have no wish to become a warrior I shall stick to this uniform. A man in ordinary dress is likely to attract the unwelcomed attentions of the press gangs, which are uncommon hot at the moment."

The gentleman gave another stiff jerk to his body, and essayed a sort of chilly smile.

"A very good answer," he said, with an air of condescension, then, changing the subject, asked: "What is your ship?"

"The *Duchess of Bedford*, sir. I am Second Mate."

"Indeed? A good ship, but somewhat small. It may interest you to know that I am a member of the Marine Interest, and own in whole or part several hereditary bottoms, including part of the *Duchess of Bedford*. She was, so far as I can recollect, built upon the bottom of the *Bodiam Castle*, which was built upon the bottom of the *Greenwich*, which in her turn was built upon the *Elector of Hanover*, but beyond that I cannot go."

The Mate was duly impressed by this nautical pedigree, and considered he was fortunate in meeting an influential man.

"Might I ask, sir, whom I have the great honour of addressing?" asked the Mate.

"My name, sir, is Tibbles. And yours?"

"John Adams, sir."

"Adams," repeated the gentleman reflectively, "surely I have heard that name. By whose interest did you enter the Service?"

"My father, sir, who is a grocer in Holborn, made the interest for me," answered the Mate. "He deals largely in tea, so has many connections with members of the Court of Directors."

"Of course, of course," said the gentleman genially, "I have had dealings with him. Well, Mr. Adams, I am content that officers such as yourself should conduct the ships I let to the Company, and when the *Duchess of Bedford* has made the statutory number of voyages and is no more serviceable you will command the ship I build on her bottom. Convey my compliments to your esteemed father. The name of Tibbles,

I flatter myself, is not unknown to him. In fact, ask him to dine with me to-morrow, and come yourself. I should be honoured. By friendship such as this we can keep the interests of the Company free from the intrusion of the nameless rabble of unknown petty traders."

Mr. Tibbles gave another stiff bow and then, the devilled chicken being set before him, busied himself with the serious matter of eating. Adams, who had consumed his steak, started on the cheese and finished off his porter. Business having temporarily slackened somewhat, the waiter hung about near the table, trying to get an opening for further conversation with Adams. At last, after flicking a few crumbs off the end of the table, he plucked up sufficient courage to make a start.

"Was the steak to your satisfaction, sir?" he asked.

"Well enough, Budge."

"I suppose, sir, you don't get steak in India?"

"Sometimes," answered Adams, "but it's mostly curries ashore and salt junk aboard."

"Those curries, sir, I suppose are served by nigger slaves?"

"Mostly," assented Adams. "Why, do you want a berth as steward in an Indiaman?"

"I would, sir," exclaimed the waiter fervently.

Mr. Tibbles laid down his knife and fork, and swallowing his mouthful, looked austerey at the waiter.

"Young man, are you endeavouring to solicit patronage?" he asked sternly.

"I'd like to go to India," muttered the waiter. "There's some chance of bettering yourself there."

"Be content with what you've got, my man," counselled Mr. Tibbles. "This wild and ruthless pursuit of money is a dreadful vice. It is a sign of the revolutionary unrest of the day that no man is content with his lot. We are not born into this world for the purpose of scrambling madly for filthy lucre. No, we are called to a certain station by Divine Providence, and it behoves us to remain content in that station. It pleases the Author of the Universe that I should provide the Honourable East India Company with ships. Since the Company does not own vessels itself it must, perforce, hire them for stated periods from others. When this period is finished a new ship is built to take the place of the old one. A situation or process known as building on the bottom of such and such a ship. Very properly this right of supplying ships is restricted to certain persons such as myself. Do I wish to abandon the Company and start supplying men-of-war or colliers? I do not. I am content with my lot, and know that I am performing a vital function in the commercial life of the nation. You in your humble station are also performing a certain function. Mark my words, if ever you find yourself in another calling, divine retribution will make the remainder of your days a period of misery and despair. Now go and fetch me a slice of pudding."

Mr. Tibbles sighed and poured himself out

another glass of sherry. He was an abstemious man who never drank more than a bottle.

"The whole world is going to the devil, Adams," he said, with a shake of the head. "Here's a drawer who has heard there is wealth in India trying to solicit patronage so that he may better himself. Better himself indeed! It's all due to these infernal Frenchmen and their fiendish nonsense. Madmen and murderers that they are."

Adams rose to take his leave, and called for his reckoning.

"I shall see you to-morrow," said Mr. Tibbles. "I trust that good results may spring from this meeting."

CHAPTER II

"Has my son returned from Blackwall?" inquired Adams Senior of an apprentice who came into the counting house.

"Mr. Henry or Mr. John, sir?"

"Mr. John, of course, you blockhead. Mr. Henry's in the shop."

"I'll ask, sir," said the apprentice, and ran off, glad to have a chance of going upstairs and getting away from the shop if only for a minute.

Adams Senior, a mountain of a man, draped rather than dressed in brown cloth, extracted a ponderous watch from his fob and clicked his tongue impatiently. He could not risk being late at the house of such an influential man as Mr. Tibbles, and yet his younger son seemed still to be absent. There was no sense in waiting, he would put on his best clothes and go no matter if John accompanied him or not. In any case it would not take the son long to dress, while he, the father, needed at least an hour to heave himself out of one suit and into another, though assisted by his wife and servants.

Henry Adams, the elder son and heir to the grocery business, lounged into the counting house. He was moderately tall and might have been as healthy and strong as his brother had he not aped the manners and customs of higher

social strata. As it was his complexion was impaired by excessive drinking, and he was already running to seed physically. Dressed in the height of fashion with velvet coat and flowered silk waistcoat, he fancied himself a lady-killer of the most irresistible ferocity.

"Henry," said the father, "I must change my clothes. I leave you in charge. See that remittance goes to Hilberry and Figg, and don't forget those chests of tea by fast coach to Winchester."

"Very well, father. Is Jack home?" replied the son, helping himself to a pinch of snuff and flicking the specks from his waistcoat.

"I don't know. But I can't wait."

The apprentice poked his head in at the door and informed his master that Mr. John was not yet in.

"Damn the boy," exclaimed Adams Senior, "he'll be late for a guinea."

"I doubt it," said Henry, "it's two hours to dinner. By the way, I hear the admirable Tibbles may have a set-back before long."

Mr. Adams gave a sort of horrified twitch, so that various lumps and rolls of fat about his person quivered in horror.

"No! Harry, you're joking!"

"I protest I am serious. Billiter's son tells me there is a movement afoot among certain Directors of the Company to hire ships by public tender. Old Tibbles is too set in his ways and too thick-headed to stand a hope of getting a tender accepted."

"It's the times," groaned old Adams. "all

this change and shifting about for nothing. Thank God I shall be six foot underground before the inevitable ruin falls on this country."

"I mean to keep pace with the times at all events," rejoined his son. "I've as good as promised young Billiter I'll back him to build a ship if the business is thrown open."

"For Heaven's sake don't do that, you'll ruin us," entreated Adams. "The Maritime Interest have been good friends of ours, and if they get wind of what you're doing we shall suffer. Poor Jack will suffer most. They'll probably discharge him."

"You can trust me to keep quiet," his son assured him.

"I don't approve," muttered old Adams, as he dragged himself slowly up the dark stairs to his living quarters over the shop. "It seems like treachery to eat a man's dinner while your son is going to take the bread out of his mouth. Damn all this change and revolution. I like settled trade and a sure income."

Half an hour later John Adams strolled into the shop, and after helping himself from an opened jar of ginger, assured the customers that tea was sure to rise, so they had better buy as much as they could while it was still cheap. The firm stocked an excellent blend at only ten shillings the pound.

"And what do you know about tea?" demanded a stout matron with a heavy moustache who was finding fault with some sugar plums.

"Madam, I bring it to England in my ship,

and I can assure you freights are rising and prices will follow," answered John.

"I am not accustomed to being addressed by mere merchant skippers," declared the lady majestically, and left the shop.

"The lady is the widow of a naval lieutenant," the assistant whispered.

Henry, who had been hovering in the background, beckoned his brother into the counting house.

"Well said, Jack, but ill-timed. Although the old hag owes us more than she can ever pay she may go gossiping to wealthy friends. If it wasn't for that we'd have had her arrested long ago."

"I'm sorry my efforts to help trade only drive it away," said John. "However, if the lady becomes too much of a nuisance it's a consolation to think you can imprison her for debt. Once these aristocratic people get into gaol they never seem to get out."

"It's the tradesman's sole means of getting revenge," replied Henry. "Half of our customers never pay, and grumble at the prices even then. Why do you think, by the way, that Tibbles invited father and yourself to dinner?"

"Just to cement friendship between persons dealing with the Company, I suppose."

"I expect you're right," agreed Henry, "let us hang together in case we hang singly."

The brothers parted, and John went upstairs to prepare himself for the feast.

In the big parlour which occupied the whole

front of the house Mrs. Adams, a withered and untidy woman, was furiously stitching at her husband's dress breeches, which he had just burst. When her younger son came in she did not even raise her head.

"A fine trouble you men are. Why must you try to get into clothes too small for you?" she demanded querulously. "Here's your father had these breeches years and won't admit he's still swelling and get another pair made. A pity you don't wear skirts like the wild Scotch."

"Or loose trousers like the Moorish women," suggested John.

"Be decent," snapped his mother. "I want no low foc'sle conversation in my parlour. There, that's done. Take these breeches to your father, John, and see if he's burst anything else."

Shortly before the dinner hour Adams Senior, in a fine satin coat, silk waistcoat, freshly powdered wig and breeches which revealed every contour of his mighty thighs, descended groaning to the street, where John, in much the same dress with the exception of the wig, waited for him at the door of a hackney coach. After much cautious pushing and careful edging sideways, John managed to settle his father in place and get in beside him.

"I'm getting too old for these frolics," gasped Adams Senior.

"Never mind, father, the French all wear trousers and loose coats now," said John consolingly, "perhaps the fashion will spread to England in a month or two."

"Trousers!" exclaimed old Adams, "me wear trousers. I'd die first. The garments of common seamen or murdering Jacobins. When gentlemen in England start wearing trousers I shall know the end has come. I'd sooner wear a wagoner's smock, that is at least the badge of an honest man."

He sat back in the coach and repeated the word "trousers" several times, and then maintained a gloomy silence until the vehicle stopped in front of a Bloomsbury house where Mr. Tibbles resided. The house, a handsome brick one in a square radiated an air of permanence and dignity proper to the dwelling of a man of assured position. The general effect of unshakable solidity was enhanced by the appearance of a massive butler in stone-coloured livery who conducted the two guests across a chilly hall and flung open a mahogany door.

"Mr. Adams and Mr. John Adams."

The company in the drawing-room who welcomed father and son were Mr. Tibbles and his two daughters, both, alas, past marriageable age, even the younger being twenty-eight; Mr. Puddock, in the Maritime Interest and Justice of the Peace, and Mrs. Puddock, the daughter of a former Alderman; Major Hicks, of the Bengal Artillery and brother-in-law of a Director of the H.E.I.C., with his wife, Mrs. Hicks, concerning whom frightful scandals circulated east of the Cape; Mrs. Cole, the widow of a nabob and a positive museum of precious stones; and finally, an undistinguished friend of the

family called Wilson, with his deaf wife, who was in no way connected with the Honourable East India Company, and was only dragged in protesting to make the number up to a dozen.

Dinner being announced, it fell to John's lot that he had to entertain Mrs. Wilson on one side and the younger Miss Tibbles on the other. He found conversation difficult owing to Mrs. Wilson being stone deaf and the fact that Miss Tibbles plainly despised him. His father, on the contrary, was enjoying himself hugely with Mrs. Hicks, who secretly kept pinching him and reduced him to helpless laughter with her sallies of wit, or what passed for wit. Mrs. Puddock on his other side had known him since childhood, the Alderman having been a grocer as well, so in a short while Adams even forgot his breeches were hurting, and vowed this was the best dinner he had ever had.

Unwilling to run to the expense of more than a butler and a coachman, Mr. Tibbles was forced to employ females for the rest of his household. The Misses Tibbles would even have dispensed with the butler had they been given their way, since disappointment in several mild affairs had implanted in their breasts a hatred of the male sex which tended to fester with the passage of time. It struck John Adams as he sat dumb at the table that one of the maids waiting at table was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. She was slight and willowy, with a mass of brown hair under her cap ; her eyes were brown and her face oval with beautifully proportioned nose and chin.

John followed her about with his eyes until, turning slightly, he caught sight of Miss Tibbles glaring at him.

"Er. . . Have you ever seen a balloon, Miss Tibbles?" he said haltingly. "Astonishingly dangerous things to go up in, I should imagine."

"No," replied the lady frigidly.

"Have you ever seen a balloon?" he shouted at Mrs. Wilson.

"Monkeys are no longer kept by ladies of quality, and I believe that kind is quite undesirable," replied the lady.

Mrs. Cole laughed and started telling a story about the Factor at Juddoogarh, who had an undignified adventure with some sacred monkeys of revolting habits. The old lady still wore her hair dressed over a large pillow with masses of artificial flowers and jewels hung on it, although the fashion had changed, while her skinny neck and bosom were covered with diamonds and rubies. Every time she moved her head a great diamond pendant in her hair swung madly to and fro, and caught the attention of old Adams, who thought the bauble must be worth a pretty penny. A woman ought not to be allowed to spend hard-won cash so lavishly on personal adornment, and even if she did she ought to take proper care of her property and not just hang it on to some fragile wisps of false hair.

In spite of snorts and sniffs from Miss Tibbles, John still kept stealing glances at the "pretty servant, who, on her part, soon realised she was the object of attention and kept blushing with

confusion as she met John's eye. As soon as Mrs. Cole had finished a number of slightly indecent anecdotes of life in India there was a lull in the conversation, and he felt it his duty to have one last despairing effort at gay prattle.

"*Apropos* of India, Miss Tibbles, I remember a very amusing incident when I was in the *Earl of Hoxton*. We were anchored off Fort St. George discharging cargo when a sail was sighted to seaward. Since it was during the last war we were thrown into some confusion at the sight for fear it might be a French man-of-war."

"I understand merchant sailors are commonly afraid of the French," interposed Miss Tibbles.

"We had on board a *buniah* and three of his wives," continued John doggedly.

"Indeed, sir, I am not interested in the beastly excesses of the Hindoos," said Miss Tibbles scornfully, "if you have no conversation kindly remain silent."

John let out a sigh and shamelessly winked at the pretty servant.

Having consumed mountains of roast flesh, fish, and fowl, washed down with somewhat inferior claret, the guests came to the dessert, the cloth was removed, and the ladies left the room. Glad to be free from the restraint the presence of their women had set on the men, they gathered round Tibbles, and the serious part of the evening commenced. Old Adams unbuttoned himself where the pressure was greatest and smiled happily.

"A rare good dinner, Mr. Tibbles, a rare good dinner. Sir, your health. Gentlemen, our host and no heel-taps."

The company rose while Mr. Tibbles remained seated and stared at his plate during the drinking of his health.

"Gentlemen," he began, rising in reply, "it gives me the liveliest satisfaction that my unworthy fare should prove palatable to such known connoisseurs as yourselves."

"Hear, hear," cried old Adams. "I'm the biggest eater in London, and I say it's the best dinner I've had."

"I am overwhelmed," murmured Mr. Tibbles. "But to continue. Having thanked you I would also like to propose a toast. A toast, gentlemen, to the most perfect, just and noble institution it has so far been possible for the wit of man to devise. An institution which confers the boon of civilisation and British system on the most benighted and backward savages. An institution, gentlemen, at once pacific and warlike, conferring through the effulgent glory of its arms fruitful peace and unfettered trade. Gentlemen, I give you the toast of the Honourable East India Company, coupled with the name of its Directors and our guest, Major Hicks."

"The Honourable Company!"

The glasses of port were tilted back with relish, since all except Mr. Wilson owed their livelihood to this tremendous monopoly. Major Hicks, being an officer in the Company's army, felt it incumbent upon him to reply to the toast.

" Gentlemen, since I have been mentioned by name, I feel that it is not unduly presumptuous if I endeavour in a few brief words to respond. The Honourable East India Company, gentlemen, honourable indeed ! Yet let us remember that, perfect as it is, there are grave dangers ahead of the Company. Let us remember, gentlemen, that a parcel of damned ignorant politicians who have never been outside the rotten boroughs they're paid to represent have the effrontery to meddle with the affairs of this noble concern. I know India and I know the Indian and I assert without fear of contradiction that until the Great Mogul's empire passed into British hands such a thing as good government, justice or peace was unknown in the peninsula. Of course, we have our wars, fighting being a religion with some of the native peoples, and a very good religion too, if you ask me. There is too much of this Methodist rant and Quaker twaddle of being kind to your enemies to-day. What the devil's the point of having an enemy if that's the aim ? But as I was saying, a lot of sycophantic, corrupt, place-hunting, ignorant fellows at Westminster have thought fit to muddle and mess and undo all the good work, I may say the noble work, the Company does in India. Where would India be without the Company ? That's a question they never dare to try to answer at Westminster, for the excellent reason they can't. They know the Company is a better judge of what's good for India than they are, even than the Indians themselves are. They call it a Tory Government, but

I call it a collection of damned Jacobins and interfering old women."

The butler sidled into the room as softly as his rather massive build permitted, and going up behind Mr. Tibbles made a funnel of his hand and breathed heavily in his master's ear.

"Very well," said Mr. Tibbles, then, rising, asked the company to excuse him.

Old Adams, who had sunk into a gentle doze, woke with a start and said "Hear, hear," as the company murmured its willingness to bear the host's absence. Left to themselves, the guests filled up their glasses and started chatting, somewhat to the disgust of the Major, who disliked having his speeches interrupted. Mr. Puddock tackled John on the question of what ships were being fitted out at Blackwall, how many were expected to sail that year, and whether it was likely that any increase in tonnage was contemplated by the Company.

"And how do you like the *Duchess of Bedford*?" he asked finally.

"She's a good enough ship, but her time is nearly done. I believe she will only be taken up for one more voyage," replied John. "I expect Mr. Tibbles will be ready with another as soon as she's finished her seventh voyage."

"Yes, I only build for the China trade, but I am always ready to build on a bottom the moment it is necessary. Has your ship been surveyed yet?"

"Not yet, sir; all the cargo has not been landed," answered John.

Once again the butler opened just sufficient of the door to allow his frame a passage, and slunk into the room on tiptoe. Creeping up behind Mr. Puddock he whispered in the gentleman's ear.

"Your master wants me? Very well."

Mr. Puddock finished his wine and with a sort of general nod to the remaining guests left the room. The butler led him across the hall to Mr. Tibbles's library, a small room at the back of the house where a few shelves of dull books, a desk and a cabinet or two were kept. As soon as the door closed behind him, Mr. Puddock found his host and the younger Miss Tibbles facing him with expressions of the deepest gloom. Mr. Tibbles was sitting at his desk, while Miss Tibbles on a hard chair was by the door.

"Puddock, a terrible catastrophe has occurred, in my house of all places," began Mr. Tibbles, "though it pains me to have to say so, one of my guests has been robbed."

"Good Heavens!"

"I know who did it," said Miss Tibbles. "As you are a magistrate, sir, I hope you will bear witness to the unmasking of the thief."

"Certainly, miss, certainly."

"Then, sir, let us act."

Miss Tibbles rose and gave the bell a vicious tug.

"I trust your suspicions are unfounded," murmured her father. "A terrible disgrace on my house."

The butler on entering was told to go and fetch Mary at once.

"Might I ask who has been robbed?" inquired Mr. Puddock.

"Mrs. Cole," whispered Mr. Tibbles in awe. "That diamond ornament in her head, you know. A terrible disgrace for me."

Hearing footsteps approach the door Miss Tibbles rose and stationed herself by the hinges. The door opened and Mary, the servant who had attracted the attention of John Adams, came in. Immediately Miss Tibbles banged the door behind the girl and placed her back against it.

"Mary," commanded that lady in a furious voice, "turn out your pockets."

"But why, miss?" asked the astonished servant.

"Do as I bid or I shall search you myself here in the presence of these gentlemen, one of whom I may tell you is a Justice of the Peace."

Recovering somewhat from her astonishment the girl smiled faintly.

"Oh! If you're looking for Mrs. Cole's diamond, miss, I found it on the landing," she said reassuringly, and putting her hand in her pocket brought out the jewel.

Mr. Tibbles gave a gasp.

"Hum," said Mr. Puddock.

A moment of dreadful silence.

"But, miss, if you wanted it why didn't you tell James it was lost?" asked Mary. "I . . ."

"Why didn't you tell James it was found?" demanded Miss Tibbles.

" I didn't get the chance, miss."

" Not another word," commanded Miss Tibbles.

Another pregnant silence.

" Well ?" said Mr. Tibbles, lifting an interrogative eyebrow at Mr. Puddock.

" Yes, I think so," sighed Mr. Puddock.

" Kindly put that jewel on my desk," said Mr. Tibbles to Mary, " Miss Tibbles will conduct you to another apartment, where you will wait until I send for you."

Mary did not quite understand what all the fuss was about, and had no idea of any possible consequences. Accordingly, she meekly left the room behind her mistress.

Mr. Tibbles rang the bell, which was answered with suspicious alacrity by the butler, who had been listening at the outside all through the interview.

" Convey my compliments to Mrs. Cole, and request her to honour me with her company here," ordered Mr. Tibbles, then, turning to Puddock, said, " I am afraid it is a clear case."

" I cannot see that I have any alternative but to commit," agreed Puddock. " Perhaps you would have the goodness to send a servant for my clerk and a constable."

CHAPTER III

MRS. COLE sat with her quilted skirt overflowing the hard chair in Mr. Tibbles' library and talked at a great pace.

" I had hardly come back into the room when your dear, sweet Georgina took me aside, and after entreating me not to scream or faint told me it was gone. I quite understood what an uproar there might be if the others noticed, so at dear Georgina's suggestion I withdrew to her apartment while she came to see her wise father. She's such a clever girl, and I can't think why she hasn't married."

" At all events, madam," interposed Mr. Puddock, " you are prepared to swear the jewel is yours."

" Of course, sir ; did not my poor departed husband give it me so that I should outshine in adornment as well as beauty that odious Hammond woman ? "

" Thank you, madam ; and you are also prepared to swear that this serving maid accompanied you when you withdrew for a few moments from the drawing-room ? "

" Most certainly. My bowels have been inordinately tiresome of late, and Dr. Hanger assures me it is due to my having been in India. I remember what . . . "

"Thank you, madam, I think the case is complete."

"I cannot express my sorrow and shame," began Mr. Tibbles, "to think that this should have happened under my roof."

"Not a word, sir, not a word," Mrs. Cole commanded graciously. "All's well that ends well, and the speed with which you caught the thief shows what an excellent host you are. I shall tell all my friends how clever you and dearest Georgina have been and how much I owe you."

"Madam, I am overwhelmed," replied Mr. Tibbles with a bow. "At all events you may be sure the thief shall hang for it."

Back in the dining room old Adams had managed to get a decanter to himself, and was getting a little confused in his speech.

"I shay the country of the credit is unlimited . . . unlimited, no matter what war. And if the debt, if the debt, national debt goes up so does interest and thsh where we come in, my boys, in the Funds. But the country of the credit is sound . . . unlimited cundit . . . "

No one listened to him. Major Hicks, discovering that the man was a grocer who appeared in his own shop, shunned him and talked to Mr. Wilson, whose chief interest in life was the study of Latin minor poets. The two compromised on Cæsar's Commentaries, and discussed with some heat the siege methods of the ancients as compared with the modern. Mr. Wilson stoutly maintained that artillery had made no difference

and that Caesar could have taken any fortress as quickly as Vauban. The Major denied Caesar any military skill whatsoever, and held that the cannon and musket could annihilate any attack by troops armed only with bows and catapults. He had blown vast hordes of Indians to pieces at various times and swore from first-hand evidence that swords, spears and knives were utterly useless in warfare. A single battery firing a few rounds of grape and canister would have scattered Caesar's legions like a puff of smoke. Mr. Wilson furiously dissented.

John Adams, unable to follow the technical and learned argument between the classicist and the artillerist, had, perforce, to listen to his father's muddled *obiter dicta* on matters of finance. Since the grocer did a good business in discounting bills and making advances on approved securities, invoices and the like, as was customary with the wealthier tradesmen, he had a thorough knowledge of contemporary affairs. John, however, had heard it all before, and did not understand what half of it was about, so he became thoroughly bored with the company and lapsed into a state of coma, only recovering to help himself to more port.

After a long absence Mr. Tibbles suddenly returned to find his guests far less sober than when he left them, as was only right and proper.

"Good port, Tibbles," cried old Adams, "you India ships' husbands know port . . . good port . . . India ships . . . husband's port."

Mr. Tibbles, although he thought the expression "ship's husband" a low one, and preferred to be known as "in the Marine Interest," was, nevertheless, gratified to be complimented by a notorious glutton. The air of formal regret he had assumed melted for a moment into a genial smile as he filled his glass. Then, assuming a magisterial air, he cleared his throat noisily.

"Gentlemen, I have to acquaint you with a most unfortunate occurrence. I most deeply regret having to confess that my hospitality has been abused. Since the tale is bound to be spread I must, although it gives me pain, inform you that a guest has been robbed."

"Robbed!" gasped old Adams, and began feverishly slapping his person to see if his purse was safe.

"Fortunately," continued Mr. Tibbles, "the thief has been apprehended and the stolen property restored."

There was a general sigh of relief, and Mr. Tibbles was pressed to tell the whole story of the theft. Having much leeway to make up in the matter of drinking, he unfolded his tale between long gulps of port.

"Puddock with his clerk is making out a warrant now," he said in conclusion, and took a deep draught.

During his absence night had fallen, and the butler had put candles on the table. In the yellow light the faces of the half-intoxicated guests appeared astonishingly inane as he looked round waiting for applause and compliments.

"I thought that butler looked a rogue . . . gallows meat," said old Adams.

"But, my dear sir, it was not the butler. It was one of the maids," corrected Mr. Wilson.

"All the same . . . can't trust a servant these days . . . Jacobins . . ."

While Mr. Wilson was delivering a complimentary speech to his host, John Adams recovered from his lethargy somewhat and wondered why a servant should be such a fool as to steal something which was certain to be missed almost immediately.

"I had hoped that we might have had an interesting discussion on Indian matters and the effect of those so-called reforms which are being suggested by unqualified persons," said Mr. Tibbles regretfully, "but this unpleasant occurrence has deprived me of that pleasure."

The butler came in with an air of tremendous importance.

"The constables have arrived, sir."

"Excuse me once more I beg, gentlemen," murmured the host as he rose to go.

"If only Tibbles was not so infernally mean he would have been spared this," opined Mr. Wilson when the guests were again alone. "A man of his position should have footmen."

"Indeed, sir?" retorted Major Hicks. "And since when has it been customary for footmen to wait upon ladies when they withdraw?"

"Footmen all damned rogues," declared old Adams.

"Possibly you have had little experience of

them," suggested the Major coldly. "In your position. . . . What the devil's that?"

A piercing scream echoed through the stone-flagged hall, followed by another.

"Murder!" cried old Adams, and staggered to his feet.

John dashed to the door, and was the first of the stampede out of the dining room. Mary, in hysterics, was being dragged by two burly constables across the hall towards the street, while Miss Georgina Tibbles watched the scene with grim satisfaction from the library.

"I didn't steal it," wailed Mary, "you know I didn't. You only say so out of spite."

John was momentarily paralysed when he saw the girl, and stood gaping foolishly while the port he had drunk made him incapable of thought.

As she struggled Mary caught sight of him.

"Save me, sir," she begged.

Mary's disordered hair and the wild despair in her face roused John to pity and a strong desire to take her in his arms and comfort her. Suddenly the wine spurred him to action.

"Avast, there," he roared in his best reef topsail voice.

Astonished at the bawl the constables stood still and temporarily relaxed their hold. In a flash Mary wrenched herself free and ran to John, who, amazed at the sound of his own voice, was wondering what he was going to do next. Mary flung herself at his feet and seized his knees.

"What an unwarranted intrusion," murmured

Major Hicks. "The fellow ought to be arrested as well."

"I only picked it up," sobbed Mary, "and I didn't have the chance to give it back."

The constables advanced with dignity, and Mary clung tighter to John's knees.

"Don't let them take me!" she cried.

"How very extraordinary that the younger Mr. Adams should prove to be a friend of the thief," remarked Miss Georgina Tibbles.

"Is it, by God!" exclaimed John, with a sudden access of reckless anger, "bring me my hat and I'll get out of this damned house."

Mary, believing that her last hope had gone and that John was going to desert her, let go his knees and let the constables lift her to her feet.

"Your hat, sir," said the butler.

"Where are you going?" John demanded of the catchpols.

"Newgate, your honour."

"I will accompany you."

"No, no," from old Adams. "Jack, stay here."

"Mr. Tibbles, I have to thank you for an excellent dinner," said John, bowing stiffly to the master of the house, who was standing bewildered at the library door. "Gentlemen, your servant."

He strode out rather unsteadily, followed by captors and prisoner.

"Boy's drunk," exclaimed old Adams, "dish-grashful scene . . . going with a drab to New-

gate . . . insulted India ship's husband. . . He's drunk."

Out in the cool night air John began to feel that he had behaved like a fool. What was he to gain by walking ahead of a couple of catchpols and a thief apparently caught red-handed? But there was no doubt the girl was pretty. Well, he had said he was going to Newgate, so to Newgate he must go. He slackened his pace a little and the others came abreast of him.

"A long walk to Newgate, your honour," observed one constable.

"If his honour would prefer to take a coach we would be able to accompany him," said the other.

"We should get there much quicker in a coach."

"That's true," agreed John. "Very well, fetch me a coach."

Accordingly one of the men ran off, leaving Mary in the custody of the other.

"Will your honour be giving evidence for the defence?" asked the remaining one.

"I have no idea," confessed John. "I don't even know what the true state of affairs is, or why I'm here, for that matter."

"I can recommend a good attorney if you should be wanting one. He briefed counsel for Billy the cracksman and got him off. Fine bit of work, sir," said the man appreciatively. "We thought we'd got Bill scragged this time, but they were too sharp for us."

Mary, who had been quietly crying ever since she was removed from the house, seemed to find a ray of hope in these words.

"He got Old Huggins off too," continued the man. "A nasty case it was against Old Huggins, but he got off on a flaw in the indictment. Very sharp work, sir."

A hackney carriage with a catchpoll on the box beside the coachman rolled round a corner and stopped beside John.

"Here you are, your honour," called the man on the box. "You step inside with the young woman and me and Jim will travel outside."

Mary, who had listened carefully, began to feel that she was not in quite so desperate a state as she at first believed, so drying her eyes, she skipped into the vehicle, the first coach which had ever been called on her behalf. Feeling still somewhat foolish, John got in beside her, the door was slammed and the horse set into a slow trot. In the darkness John groped for Mary's hand, and having found it, drew her arm through his.

"Well, my lass, here we are."

"Thank you, sir. You will get me let off, won't you, sir?" replied Mary. "I only just picked up the pendant, sir, and seeing how pretty it was I thought I would look at myself in the glass with it on. Then I went below stairs, and as soon as I got there Miss Georgina sent for me and said she would have me searched by the master and another gentleman who was a judge. They can't say I was stealing when I showed it to them myself, can they, sir?"

"I'm damned if I know," confessed John. "This law is a rum business altogether. How-

ever, never mind about that. Do you know you're the prettiest girl I've ever seen?"

"Oh! sir, please don't joke," begged Mary. "You see I'm going to prison and I don't want compliments. Won't you help me?"

"Of course I will," promised John easily. "I'll see that attorney in the morning. But since we're alone here together we might as well make the best of it."

He put his arm round her waist and gave her a warm hug. So warm that he could feel her heart beating fast against his chest.

"Please," entreated Mary in vain as he kissed her.

The coach drew up with a jerk while Mary was still unsuccessfully trying to repulse her benefactor.

"Damme," exclaimed John, "we can't be at Newgate yet."

There was a discreet tap at the window, and one of the catchpolls opening an inch of door said :

"If your honour would like a little drop of something for the lady and himself, we're just outside a very good house. There's no great hurry now you're travelling by coach."

"Get me two glasses of cordial," ordered John, handing a coin which felt like a shilling to the man, "and treat yourselves with the change."

"Thank you, my lord."

"I don't want a drink," cried Mary as the door shut again, "and I wish you had never taken a coach but let me walk. I don't believe you mean

to help me at all, and that you've only followed me so as to be able to play with me."

Bitterly disappointed in her champion, she dissolved into tears once more.

"Come, come, I'm not as bad as all that," protested John as he tried to embrace her again.

"You're worse," retorted Mary, "you're drunk."

"Nonsense. I can walk."

"I can smell drink," insisted Mary, "and I saw you myself put away enough to make any man drunk, besides what you must have taken afterwards."

"How the deuce can I be drunk if I can walk?" repeated John, who clung to the sailor's belief that so long as a man was not completely paralysed he should be considered sober.

The catchpoll opened the door sufficiently to allow his hand and two glasses to enter the coach.

"They want the glasses back, your honour."

"I don't want any," said Mary.

"Very good," answered the catchpoll, and as though by magic a glass vanished.

John took his, tossed it off in one gulp, and gave the empty glass back to the man. A few moments later the coach started once again for Newgate.

"I don't see that kissing you is a sign of my being drunk," said John, "I think it shows I've got a very keen eye for beauty."

Imprisoning her hand he played with her fingers as he spoke.

"You appear to me to be a girl who ought to

be kissed and kissed again. Why be pretty if no one will love you?"

" You don't love me," cried Mary furiously, " you only want to play with me."

" I love you passionately, I loved you the very first moment I saw you," protested John, and gave a hiccup as the cordial came into contact with the port already in him.

" I don't love you," replied Mary with heat, " and what's more, I won't love you."

" Be reasonable. Here's a man who is doing all he can to help you because he loves you reasonably, I mean passionately. A man who has consigned a ship's husband to the devil out of love for you. A man who . . . well, the fact of the matter is you're so damned pretty I can't keep my hands off you."

Although the space was somewhat cramped, Mary managed to get a good swing with her hand before it landed right on the tip of John's chin and made him bite his tongue badly. Mary disengaged her other hand and drew herself into the corner.

" I don't see what you're driving at," said John at last with some difficulty.

" Oh ! Be quiet."

They drove the rest of the way to Newgate in silence. But when the coach did finally draw up before the prison Mary repented of her hastiness. She wished she had insisted again and again on John promising to help her, and realised a trustworthy arm round her would allay to some extent the terror she felt when the catchpolls opened the

door and begged her to alight. Followed by John, she passed through a wicket in the heavy gate and was admitted to a small office where some turnkeys were drinking and playing cards round a table.

"A new lodger, gentlemen," announced one of the catchpolls.

"The gentleman is accompanying her to make sure she's comfortable," said the other.

The circle of cardplayers broke up and the group of tallow candles which were flickering in the middle of the table was dispersed. While one man searched for pens and forms in a battered desk, another took the warrant from the catchpolls and read it, while a third favoured John with a low bow.

"You would like the lady to have a room to herself, sir," he began. "We have some very good apartments suitable for a single lady where you can visit her without fear of interruption. There's a nice three-guinea room I could recommend, and in the morning no doubt we could arrange for attendance. There is a petty larceny who will wash for a lady, and I have no doubt that some of our felonies could be hired to sweep and so on. I have one in mind, a manslaughter who is a mother of six who would be only too glad of the chance to earn a little. Then there's meals, sir. We have a rule, a strong rule, sir. No credit. The fact of the matter is, sir, we get all sorts here, and, although I'm sorry to have to say it, some of them are downright dishonest. Now I should recommend either your giving a regular

sum to the pastrycook or else letting the lady have enough herself to buy what she wants."

John felt in his pocket and pulled out a guinea and some silver.

"Take the guinea for the present," he said.
"I'll come back in the morning."

"The lady shall be well looked after," the gaoler assured him as he pocketed the guinea.
"She won't be here very long as she'll come up these Sessions, and she won't want lodgings after the trial. It'll be one thing or the other."

Mary, who had been offered a chair, listened to this last observation with a shudder. Though everything seemed fantastic and unreal she felt as though she had arrived at the first stage on the road to the gallows.

The formalities of committal having been completed by the catchpolls, and one of the turnkeys, Mary was invited to step up to her new apartments. She rose trembling and made no protests when John took her in his arms and kissed her, then she meekly followed a turnkey with a lighted candle and a heavy door shut behind her.

CHAPTER IV

IN a gloomy little courtyard near Chancery Lane John discovered the grimy office of Mr. Whilberry, the attorney who had done so much to prevent felons from meeting an untimely end. It was said that the surgeons, who had the privilege of dissecting those who had died on the gallows, prayed daily that Mr. Whilberry should fall sick, so that they might make an end of him and ensure a proper supply of corpses.

Mr. Whilberry himself was a small, shrunken man with threadbare black clothes and a rather dirty white wig.

"Not a very good case," he opined, when John had finished telling him of Mary's troubles. "I don't like cases where servants are involved. Juries don't like dishonest servants, and I don't think her defence is a very good one."

He gave a dry cough and looked at the calendar.

"We have very little time," he continued. "But I think we can manage. How many of the witnesses for the Crown do you think it will be possible to keep away from the court?"

"I don't know," confessed John. "I cannot see how I can prevent all of them coming."

"Unfortunately, I am afraid we shall not be able to suppress this justice," mused Mr. Whilberry, "but if you are not minding the expense

I can buy a number of witnesses to good character and so forth. Do you think you could get any other servants in this house to swear the prisoner showed them the jewel and asserted her intention of giving it back to the owner at once ? ”

“ I'll try,” promised John.

“ I will send my clerk to interview the prisoner and then we can see how the defence ought to be shaped,” promised Mr. Whilberry. “ Meanwhile, try to buy the other servants.”

As he went out into Chancery Lane John came to the conclusion that the law was a very tricky affair and in no way connected with justice. Since he had been up and about ever since early morning he thought he would go to his usual coffee house in Fleet Street and consider matters. He still had a slight headache due to mixing unaccustomed wines on the previous evening, and had gone without his breakfast due to his haste in getting to Newgate as soon as the gates were opened. Mary had received him in the common yard among a crowd of malefactors of both sexes, and beyond giving a full account of her version of the matter had refused to give him any encouragement in his efforts at gallantry. She reminded him he had promised to help, and insisted on his seeing an attorney at once.

The coffee house was not very full, it being too early for men to discuss the affairs of the day, and merchants were still busy. John went to his usual settle and waited for the drawer to come. The same young man in the green coat appeared, but seemed sad and distracted when John gave

his order. After going away to see about a steak and draw a pint of ale, he came dolefully back to John's table.

"I hope you will excuse my boldness the other night, sir," he mumbled.

"Certainly. A perfectly innocent lot of questions."

"Anyhow, it doesn't matter now," said the waiter gloomily, "nothing matters."

"Have you found another way of making a fortune?" asked John.

"A fortune is no longer required, sir. I don't suppose you happen to know anything about the law, sir?"

"Damn the law!" exclaimed John.

"Oh! Yes, sir, damn it completely," groaned the drawer. "It's murder, that's what I call it, murder."

"True enough. Bloody murder," agreed John.

"Cold-blooded, premeditated, horrid, gloating murder," amended the drawer as a few tears trickled down his cheeks. "Murder by Act of Parliament with all bishops standing round to pull on the rope."

"How have you run foul of it?" asked John.

"I haven't, sir, it's my Lucy. They'll hang her for sure."

He mopped his eyes with a corner of his apron.

"Yes, sir, she and I had a liking for each other. I'll go so far as to say a love for each other. And now she's been taken to Newgate."

"What for?"

"The liking, that is to say the love. I never knew there was any trouble, she being a slight little thing and her skirts being full. She never told me and we didn't meet above once in a while and even then as like as not we were not alone, so I never knew she was going to be a mother by me. I don't even know she realised it herself, and then when it came it died, and they've took her for murder on the information of her mistress."

"What was she ? "

"A servant, sir, an ordinary maid. And to think that if she'd done anything wrong and been taken up before this they would never have hanged her."

"Why not ? " asked John.

"Oh ! They never hang an expectant mother, sir."

"Don't they ? " asked John sharply. "Are you sure ? "

"Certain, sir."

"That's a blessing," said John cheerfully. "I can do something about that."

"About poor Lucy, sir ? " asked the drawer hopefully.

"I'm afraid not. I was thinking about something else."

"Ah ! sir. I wish I could."

The drawer went away to get John's steak. While eating it John decided to go to Newgate at once. A sudden thought entered his mind ; was there not much talk of the law's delays ? He must see about delaying it. He munched

away and drank his beer feeling that he was winning the game he had accidentally started to play.

“ So I’ve run you to earth, my lad.”

John looked up from his plate and saw his father scowling at him.

“ A pretty son,” growled the old man, slumping down on the seat opposite. “ You’ve ruined your career.”

“ Indeed ? ”

“ Yes, sir, indeed, and it won’t help you to sit smirking there like a damned dancing master. When I say you’ve ruined your career I mean that it is only through me that you can repair the damage done. To insult an India ship’s husband and go off with a thieving little slut ! How can Tibbles overlook it, sir ? Answer me that.”

“ Oh ! Damn Tibbles.”

“ Ah ! But Tibbles can damn you,” retorted the old man. “ You will sit down here and now and write a letter of apology at my dictation to Tibbles, and later on you will pay a call at the house and apologise to the whole family. Drawer ! Pens, ink and paper here at once.”

“ But . . . ”

“ No buts. Not a word unless you want to lose all hope of promotion.”

“ Will he let this girl off if I crawl ? ” asked John.

“ Let the girl off ! ” roared his father. “ He will do nothing of the kind. She is already as good as dead, you young fool.”

“ Indeed ? ”

"Don't keep saying 'indeed' like a half-witted parrot. Here's the paper, now write."

John selected a suitable pen and spread out a sheet of paper, then started to write.

"Dear, no, honoured, no, dear. Yes, Dear sir," dictated his father, "it is feeling, I mean, it is with feelings, no, emotions. It is with emotions of the deepest or, perhaps, acutest. Yes, it is with emotions of the acutest shame that I take my pen to write. . . . Hum. . . . Let me think."

"Would it not be easier if I wrote the letter and submitted it to your approval?" asked John.

"Certainly not. You have no idea of politeness. Now write as I tell you and you can make a fair copy afterwards. What did I say last?"

"Take my pen to write," answered John.

"Very well. Take my pen to write this humble apology for my disgraceful behaviour beneath your hospitable roof last night. Believe me, sir, had it not been for the fact that I had . . . I was. . . . No, that I indulged beyond the limits of moderation and . . . and prudence in your excellent wine I can assure you upon my honour that this insult would never have been offered to your house. Perhaps illustrious house is better. Ever mindful of the benefits I have received from you and deeply aware of the . . . no, deeply conscious of the fact that I have repaid good with evil I humbly beg that you will condescend to accept my most heartfelt and sincere

apologies. Believe me, sir, I remain your most humble and obedient servant to command."

While John was laboriously making a fair copy his father called for a newspaper and some wine. After a short silence old Adams gave a sudden exclamation.

"John, my boy, the India trade is about to be thrown open to private merchants, and any Tom, Dick or Harry will be able to send a ship to Calcutta. The whole universe is breaking up. There's no respect for ancient institutions, no discipline left."

John signed his name with a flourish, sanded the letter and called for wax and a candle.

"I believe the Company is still to have the monopoly of shipping," he said to his father. "The surveyors told me there would be a whole fleet of new ships laid down this year."

"The man writing in this newspaper doesn't think so," replied his father gloomily. "However, that is by the way. Give me that letter, and be sure to come home this evening. You're not likely to be doing anything this afternoon, so you can call upon Tibbles and make a personal apology."

"Not this afternoon. I am busy."

"Busy! Drivel!" snapped the old man. "I shall tell Tibbles to expect you."

"It's quite impossible for me to go this afternoon," protested John. "I have a previous engagement."

"No engagement can interfere with your duty. I shall tell Tibbles you are coming and if

you don't go it will be a further insult and completely ruin all your chances of advancement in the Maritime Service," declared his father.

"I shall only be ruined if you tell him," John pointed out. "It would be far better if we left time for the letter to soak in. Don't fear, I'll go and see Tibbles soon enough. I want to see him badly."

"Why?"

"To see if I can persuade him to let Mary off," explained John. "I believe . . ."

"You believe!" exclaimed his father with withering scorn. "You lecherous young fool, can't you see the girl is already half way up the steps to the gallows? Has it ever entered your thick head?"

"There's no harm in trying everything," answered John.

"Yes there is," contradicted his father. "If you so much as mention that girl to Tibbles you have blasted your career. Are you completely mad? Here is a little slut who was revealed in the presence of a magistrate to be in possession of stolen property. Do you think Tibbles is going to forgive her for stealing from his guests? Yes, stealing from a guest worth over a hundred thousand pounds."

"Why not?"

"Because, you fool, if he tried to let the girl off, which, of course, he can't, but if he did, it would seem as though he approved her action. The charge has been made and the trial ordered, so now it is merely a matter of time before she

swings. Nothing you say to Tibbles can prevent her trial and conviction, and any reference to the matter can only bring ruin upon yourself. Are you convinced now, blockhead ? "

" I am convinced there is nothing to be gained by mentioning the matter to Tibbles," answered John, " but I think there is some hope for the girl even yet if the case is managed properly."

" Then you had better reconsider the matter," said his father. " I say the girl will be hanged. She has a Justice of the Peace, an India ship's husband, his daughter and the widow of an immensely rich nabob to swear away her life. What defence can she put up against such an attack ? None. She may have looks enough to rouse your beastly appetite, but that won't save her. Once for all I say the girl will swing, and nothing you do can save her, so you'd best cast about for another mistress."

The old man got ponderously to his feet, and taking his hat wagged a forefinger at his son.

" This afternoon you go to Tibbles, my boy."

" Very well," replied John resignedly.

Old Adams nodded and went out of the coffee house, leaving his son to settle the bill.

Some minutes later John walked along Fleet Street towards Ludgate deep in thought, so deep that he frequently collided with passers-by. He had considerable faith in his father's opinion of affairs of the world, and believed it was probably true that Mary had no chance of acquittal. Further examination of the problem convinced

him that the defence would be hopeless. Mr. Puddock in the few moments of conversation had seemed a reasonable and honest man who would not send a girl to prison for nothing, and even Tibbles, a stiff and self-important person, would not allow one of his own household to be accused of theft unless there was some justification for the charge. It seemed probable that Mary was a little rogue.

Arrived at Newgate John was admitted to the yard and was immediately seized on by an importunate prisoner dressed as a clergyman, who begged for a contribution towards the costs of his defence.

"A trifling charge my dear sir," the prisoner assured him, "and one I have no doubt I could soon have cleared myself if I had not, in a moment of generosity, given my month's income to an ailing aunt. Dropsy, sir, a most distressing complaint, and what are my small cares beside the tortures suffered by an elderly lady? Five guineas repayable in punctual monthly instalments is all I require."

"What is the charge?" asked John.

"Nothing, sir, nothing. A slight misunderstanding. I was about to assist a young woman over a stile when she treacherously flung herself on the ground and screamed rape. Even if the charge were true and proven you need have no doubts for the safety of your money. Rape, although a felony, is with benefit of clergy."

Seeing John was apparently being successfully solicited for money, another prisoner who wore

fashionable if somewhat greasy clothes, approached and touched him on the arm.

"Excuse me, sir, but I am endeavouring, like Diogenes of old, to find an honest man. I flatter myself I have met the object of my search in yourself, sir," began the prisoner. "Imagine my ridiculous fate to be arrested on a preposterous charge, which I can easily disprove, at the moment when I was about to conclude a very advantageous transaction."

"What is the charge?" asked John.

"A laughable affair altogether," replied the prisoner. "Happening to see a gold snuff-box lying on the floor at a masquerade, I picked it up and shortly afterwards, when showing it to a friend and asking him if it was his, I was seized by a vulgar fellow and accused of picking his pocket. Of course, I shall be acquitted by the jury without their leaving the box, but I am at the moment somewhat straitened for funds owing to my usual remittance from the country being delayed. If you would . . ."

"No," said John firmly and tore himself free.

As he went in search of Mary he thought to himself that probably every one in the huge crowd of prisoners would be willing to swear by all the gods to complete innocence, and would explain that the arrest was due to a foolish mistake or malice. After some annoyance and trouble he at last discovered Mary talking to a middle-aged man in a wagoner's smock with a whip in his hand. He was a red-faced, jolly-looking fellow who, as soon as Mary pointed towards

John and spoke his name, thrust out a large hand.

"I'm honoured to meet you, sir, and would like to shake you by the hand for helping my daughter," he said with apparent sincerity.

John shook hands with him gravely.

"I am pleased to give what slight assistance is possible, and can only hope that her case is not altogether hopeless," he answered. "Has the lawyer's clerk been to see you?"

"Yes," replied Mary. "But he didn't seem to talk sense. He started making up all sorts of stories, and wouldn't listen when I told him what really happened."

"That's true," agreed her father. "He wouldn't stick to the point."

"No. The point is too dangerous," said John. "No one will believe it."

Mary gave a gasp, while her father scratched his head.

"From what I have heard," continued John, "neither Mr. Tibbles nor Mr. Puddock are lying, and even if they were their evidence would be believed before the unsupported statements of a servant."

"Oh dear! Oh dear," groaned Mary's father. "So perhaps that lawyer fellow was right in trying to make up a story. They're very clever at making things up, those lawyers. I remember them saying a young man of twenty was only an infant, although he was the father of two children with a third on the way."

"It seems the only hope," said John.

"But they must believe me!" cried Mary.

"They must believe me when I'm telling the truth."

A clock struck eleven before John could reply.

"I must go," said Mary's father. "Eleven o'clock. I shall be late. But I know you've promised to do all you can, sir."

"I have," answered John. "I will do all that is possible to save your daughter's life."

Mumbling incoherent thanks, the wagoner ran off, the picture of misery. After a night in the prison and a morning spent in the company of every kind of criminal Mary's spirits were at a low ebb. As she looked round the yard thronged with prisoners and their friends she thought of the stalls at Smithfield and the herded cattle waiting their turn at the slaughter-house.

"Shall we go to your room, it would be more private?" suggested John.

Mary looked at him listlessly. All her powers of resistance were numbed by the hopelessness which had overcome her.

"I know what you want," she whispered.

"Do you hate me for it?" asked John softly, as he took her hand.

"No. I suppose it's natural."

"Come," begged John.

"You want to be paid for all you have done?" asked Mary, standing her ground.

"I've done little enough except to find out from a lawyer that there's small hope," answered John.

"There's no hope," said Mary in a low voice. "No hope. So you want your way with me

before the hangman and the surgeons have theirs. If I'm to die I might at least have a chance of going to heaven. I don't believe I shall if I give in to you."

"I don't know about religion," answered John, "but I do know this. They never yet hanged a pregnant woman. If I can get you with child you'll be saved."

"That's true. But if you fail?"

"We must take the chance," replied John. "If you were a man you could plead benefit of clergy, I suppose, or, now that there is a war, join the navy. But as it is . . ."

"And if I live and bear you a child?"

"Oh! I'll provide for you as well as I can," promised John. "I'm seldom more than eighteen months or two years away on a voyage."

"Would you marry me?" asked Mary after a short pause.

"I've promised to consult my father before marrying anyone," said John shamefacedly.

"That means no," remarked Mary. "I suppose there is no reason why you should. I know you're doing all you can to help me, but you want to help yourself as well. If you hadn't taken a fancy to me I should have been without friends or even a lawyer. Perhaps if I had been with a master who had sons instead of daughters I would have had to give way to them. If I die perhaps I shall be forgiven for doing all I could to remain alive, and if I live I shall owe my life to you. Hanging is a dreadful way of dying."

CHAPTER V

OLD ADAMS, having rung Mr. Tibbles's front door bell, was admitted superciliously by the stone-coloured butler and left to wait in the draughty hall while the menial went to know his master's pleasure. After a few moments the man re-appeared and with less condescension in his manner asked Mr. Adams to follow him to the library.

Mr. Tibbles was not looking his best. Clad in a frayed dressing-gown with a cotton nightcap on his head instead of a wig he did not seem the precise host of the previous evening. Although apparently careworn and sad he managed to summon a faint smile of welcome.

"Ah, Mr. Adams, we are living in terrible times," he exclaimed. "I suppose you have seen the papers."

"What, private trade to India being thrown open?" asked old Adams.

"No, I do not think the Government will be so mad as that. Have you not heard of Bartholomew and Peck's failure?"

"Oh, that; I've known they were finished for weeks."

"I would not believe it," sighed Mr. Tibbles. "I knew them both well and I would not believe it."

"It's their own fault," said old Adams, to dismiss the matter. "I've come, sir, to apologise for my son's behaviour last night, and have brought a letter of apology from him. Before . . ."

"I freely forgive him," interposed Mr. Tibbles. "I hope I shall live to forget the night. I can at least forgive. I had hoped that we might have discussed matters of trade. . . . But now I have lost heavily, very heavily."

"But, damme, sir, you had no dealings with that wretched firm, I trust," exclaimed Adams, completely forgetting to give thanks for the forgiveness of his son.

His commercial instincts were shocked. Everyone knew Bartholomew and Peck were unsound, and that neither partner had a grain of business sense, although they affected the fine gentleman and kept carriages. Tibbles was just the sort of fool who would be impressed by such outward show.

"Alas, I had. I trusted them as gentlemen."

"Gentlemen have no place in business," growled old Adams. "However, your position must be sound. You are a ship's husband, and the Company have by custom to come to you for ships. You can recoup any losses easily enough. One good turn deserves another, and you've acted handsomely by my son so I'll back you to build on the bottom of any worn-out ship."

Mr. Tibbles sprang to his feet, and, leaning over his desk grasped Adams's hand.

"Sir . . . sir, you are noble," he said in a choking voice.

He sank back into his chair with the air of a reprieved criminal.

"Benson and Pott have just refused to renew a bill," he said. "It is the first time such a thing has happened to me, and I feel it deeply."

"Adams and Son will back it for you," promised old Adams. "I think we can get on very well together. My elder son considers there are better prospects for us in financing ventures than there are in retail and wholesale trade. I don't wholly agree with him, but now there is a war I think if we keep our eyes open we might make a tidy bit on advances to those in the Indian interest. My younger son thinks there is likely to be a call for new tonnage, and I think we shall be able to drive out the Dutch and others and get a world monopoly of Asiatic trade for the duration of the war."

"Exactly the situation I had hoped to discuss last night," said Tibbles sorrowfully. "I feel there are great changes at hand and that my life is drawing to its close. There is no one to carry on my name and look after my manifold interests when I am gone. I frequently wonder whether my daughters will be reduced to penury in the general upheaval which is sure to come. Would that I had a son."

"You should have married the girls off," said Adams. "No one is going to bother about two old maids."

"I tried, but I aimed too high. All my schemes came to nothing. Until to-day I

believed myself secure, absolutely secure, but now I see all is crumbling or rotten."

"I like settled conditions and assured position as much as any man, and I don't like all this change for the sake of change," replied old Adams. "But I think there will be golden opportunities for those who keep their eyes open. Mind you the French may be massacring their nobles, but so far as I can understand they leave shopkeepers and merchants alone. Never mind the lords if they lose their heads on Tower Hill or swing at Tyburn, we have ourselves to look after. You're a cut above me in social rank, no doubt, but what does that matter now? Let's stick to the £.s.d. and keep our heads on our shoulders."

"There's some truth in what you say," admitted Tibbles. "Politeness and honour seem doomed and the age of the plebeian at hand."

"Then let's be plebeian and make what we can out of it," cried old Adams. "I'm willing to do anything short of wearing trousers."

"Trousers," exclaimed Mr. Tibbles with a shudder. "I could never descend to that."

"Now we can run together very profitably," continued old Adams. "You've got various interests, hereditary bottoms and the like, while I've got cash and a good name in business. Put the two together and we both profit."

"The age of chivalry is dead," remarked Tibbles, with whom the idea of trousers still rankled.

"Chivalry!" exclaimed Adams. "There never was any in business. Where's the chivalry

in chartering ships to the Company at twelve pound a ton more than they're worth, which you've been doing all your life?"

"I have certain rights . . ." began Tibbles.

"Exactly, and between us we can put them to good use and make them yield more than they have in the past. Shall we work together?" demanded Adams.

"Yes!" cried Tibbles. "A fig for gentility. Let us cement our alliance by marrying your sons to my daughters."

"Hum. I can't promise that," muttered Adams guardedly. "Henry my eldest would never consent. You know your daughters are advanced in years. They breed best if they're married at the usual age, sixteen or thereabouts. I'm not too sure about your daughters welcoming the idea either. I've always stuck to my shop and let society go hang, and so they will think they're marrying beneath them. They would be too if they married me, but my boys have had some schooling."

"I am afraid that after almost getting married to the grandson of a baronet my younger girl might at first regard a union with one of your sons with some disfavour, but I think I can overcome that. You must admit that such a marriage would prove beneficial to both families, and I am willing to make a settlement."

"There are advantages," agreed Adams. "Your girls would be sure of protection. But it's quite out of the question so far as Harry is concerned. Now John, the young scamp who

disgraced himself here last night, might be persuaded. But there would have to be handsome inducements. I am sure to get him a command some day, and he will make a fortune by it unless he's an utter fool."

"I agree there are considerable emoluments to be gained by the commander of an East India-man, but I am quite willing to make Georgina my heir and only give Amelia, my eldest, an annuity sufficient for an elderly spinster," said Tibbles. "Georgina is only twenty-eight, and ought to be able to present her spouse with numerous little pledges of love before old age creeps on. If our joint ventures are successful, she ought to be heiress to a considerable estate. Furthermore, I think I can obtain a first mate's place for your son at once. Next voyage we might be in a position to give him command, so that he could retire about the age of forty with a good income."

"Yes, that's a sound proposition," remarked Adams approvingly. "I will do all I can to persuade the boy. I'll make him see that it's to his advantage and his duty. When he first went to sea I made him promise never to marry without my consent, and he'll only get that consent so long as he marries your daughter."

Shortly afterwards old Adams took his leave, being attended to the front door by Mr. Tibbles himself, much to the amazement of the butler. On his way to Holborn he congratulated himself on getting a footing in the Maritime Interest, and reviewed the possibilities of his position.

It was not a long walk to his shop, but by the time he arrived he was quite breathless, and had to sit down for a few minutes in the counting house before he was able to break the good news to his son Henry.

The Maritime Interest was one of the closest guarded monopolies in London, with a prescriptive right to swindle the East India Company. Although the Company pretended to get its ships by public tender the tenders of the Maritime Interest were always accepted as soon as a ship was worn out and a new one was chartered to the Company at the accustomed rate per ton whether she was worth it or not. The Company never refused a tender since all in the Interest were shareholders in the Company. Those outside the Interest never got a ship taken up even if they tendered at half the usual figure.

As soon as he had got his breath old Adams sent for his elder son and told him with some pride what had occurred.

"A very shrewd stroke, father," said Henry with languid approval. "I do not myself think that hereditary bottoms will last much longer, but we can get a share of the profits while they are still to be made, and I have another iron in the fire by being connected with those outside the Interest. By the way, there is one thing we can do at once."

"What is that?"

"Tender for convict ships," answered Henry. "The Company are going to supply the Govern-

ment with some. I understand any old hulk will do."

While old Adams after an hour's work was still dictating letters and memoranda to his clerk, John came into the shop. His father at once sent for him.

"I am going to see Tibbles at once," said John listlessly.

"I want to talk to you first," replied his father. "Wait upstairs a few minutes while I finish these letters."

John wandered upstairs deeply preoccupied, and strolled into the parlour, where an elderly maid was busy polishing a big mahogany table in the centre of the room. John watched her for a while and then, after gazing aimlessly at the dark panelling of the walls and the china ornaments on the mantelpiece, cleared his throat.

"Sarah, if a guest here dropped a gold snuff-box in the passage and you found it, and just as you did so the master sent for you, what would you do?"

"Why, Master John, I'd put the snuff-box on a tray and bring it with me," answered the maid carelessly.

John nodded and continued to watch her.

"Do you want anything, sir?" asked the maid, who was puzzled at this close scrutiny of her work.

"No, I'm just thinking," answered John.

He had been thinking furiously ever since he left Newgate. When half drunk he had impulsively followed a pretty face, as he had followed

others, and he had won his objective, as he had won others, but never before had he been filled with sadness at his success. Not accustomed to introspection or deep reflection, his head was muddled and perplexed with a host of new problems.

When his father came in he found him staring out of the window at the passers-by on the pavement below.

"Where have you been since you left the coffee house?" asked his father.

"Newgate," replied John involuntarily.

"Damn Newgate!" shouted old Adams. "I can't have you spending your time in the company of criminals. You must think of your future. I've set your foot on the ladder and you must do the climbing yourself. However, I am willing to give you help so long as I live. I don't know what you want, but I know what is best for you. Harry has got a head for business and can look after himself when I'm dead, but you've been at sea since childhood and haven't had a chance to learn all the ways of the world and tricks of the trade, so I want to plan out a course for you which will ensure your remaining in a good position. Now, my boy, money is a great thing, but it is difficult to pick up unless you know the way, and you don't. I've had to support you until you rose high enough in the Maritime Service to live on your pay. If you will follow my advice you can be sure that you will be able to retire with a good income long before you are too old to enjoy it."

"Thank you," murmured John, who had not taken in half his father's speech.

"Now, we must make some slight sacrifices, or rather do things which at first sight seem unpalatable, if we want to get money," continued old Adams. "I have arranged an expedient which, though you may not think it very pleasant, will ensure you a good income for the rest of your life. Are you willing to exert yourself and override any trifling personal tastes to win a fortune?"

"Oh, yes," answered John carelessly, "I want money as much as any man."

"Good!" exclaimed old Adams. "You have some sense. Now, I've always done my best for you and never been hard. Will you trust me in this and do as I say?"

"If you like," said John, still watching the street.

"If you'll promise to do what I tell you I swear you shall have five hundred a year now."

"Five hundred a year!" repeated John in wonder, and turned smiling to his father. "Damme, that's a gentleman's income."

"There will be more later, Jack, perhaps five thousand," said old Adams eagerly. "When you've done your time as a Commander you will be worth at least five thousand. Five hundred now, Jack, and at least three thousand when you leave the sea. But you will promise to do what I tell you, won't you, Jack? Promise!"

"Of course!" cried John. "If I'm to live like a lord. I don't mind working, and sometimes I think I'd rather be at sea than anywhere else."

Get me a command, father, and I'll show you I'm not an utter fool in business."

"I can't get you a command this voyage, only a chief mate's," replied his father cautiously. "But I have made all the arrangements, Jack. Now you have promised to carry out my orders you are made for life. You have promised, you know."

"Yes, yes, I know I can trust you. What have I to do first?"

"Go and change into your best clothes, Jack, and then go to Mr. Tibbles and ask him for the hand of his younger daughter."

Jack gave a gasp and sat down with a bang on the window seat.

"You want me to marry that?" he asked with difficulty.

"It's all arranged, Jack. She's to be the heiress of Tibbles's fortune, and there's to be a good settlement. Remember, you've promised."

"Promised! Yes, you've tricked me into promising."

"I disagree," answered his father mildly, "I pointed out that we must shovel a few loads of dung if we want a good crop. Nobody but an utter fool would throw away a chance like this. When you are my age you will realise that one woman is as unpleasant as another, and taken all round it doesn't matter who you marry. Even Mrs. Fitzherbert or any other notorious beauty would soon prove to be the same as any other wife after a year or two of wedded life. You're at the stage when you like to let your fancy rove,

and you're off with the old love before she becomes a burden. You can still go a-whoring after marriage if the prospect seems attractive. You'll have to marry sooner or later in any case."

"It's not living in the same house with the woman, it's sharing a bed which I don't like," said John.

"Bah! You've bedded hundreds of wenches, I dare swear. What's the difference in the dark?" demanded his father. "There's a positive advantage with a wife; you hope for children rather than fear them. You must settle down some time, and now I've made the best arrangement for you it's possible to make."

"Sound reasons are all very well in matters of trade. But this is a matter of feelings," answered John. "I've got very strong feelings elsewhere."

"Probably. I dare swear half the bridegrooms we see driving to church would far rather be in the arms of some trollop. But it's a mistake to think marriage is a matter of feelings. It concerns a man's whole future well-being, and when all the religious and other trappings are stripped off it is shown to be as much a matter of trade as buying East India stock."

"I don't want to do it," said John doggedly.

"I don't for a moment suppose you do," replied his father, and then gave a full account of his relations with Tibbles.

"So you see," he said in conclusion, "a marriage will ensure a binding agreement between us. Tibbles will know that we shan't leave him in

the lurch, since it would only mean that you got nothing when he died. You've promised, my boy, and for all our sakes I shall hold you to that promise."

John gave a gesture of surrender.

"If a girl with a conscience will give way to save her life, I suppose a man with none must to save his future."

He rose from the window seat and faced his father.

"I'll go and dress now," he promised.

CHAPTER VI

MARY's cell in Newgate happened to be in the passage occupied by the elite of the prison. On one side the editor of a Whig newspaper was doing eighteen months for criminal libel, but this was the ordinary hazard of a journalist's life, and in no way interrupted the publication of the journal. It merely meant that during the hours when the public were admitted the passage was thronged with boys from the printers, politicians, men about town and the usual hangers-on of the Press. A little farther on an editor of a republican pamphlet who had been sentenced for sedition was busy making it certain that he would be tried for treason. The only prisoner who felt at all uneasy or aggrieved was a Tory writer who had accused Fox of sodomy and incest, and had received no help from Pitt when he was arrested. No lords or ministers visited him, and he suffered agonies of envy when he saw the Whig entertaining great men of the day in his cell, although the fellow had been imprisoned for printing in full an account of how the Prince of Wales had pulled his horses at Newmarket, and mentioned nine well-authenticated cases of His Royal Highness being detected cheating at cards. The final exasperation was when he heard through the turnkey that a common thief had been allowed quarters on the same landing.

The morning after his second visit to Mr. Tibbles John went to Newgate as usual, and after giving the turnkey the usual tip was admitted to the yard, which was becoming less densely crowded as the sessions progressed and prisoners came up for trial. The condemned hold was becoming congested, and a batch of executions imminent. John had scarcely got into the yard when he found himself face to face with the drawer from the coffee house.

"Oh ! Mr. Adams, sir," exclaimed the drawer, "if you want to help anyone here, my poor Lucy is the one."

"I haven't come here for charity, Budge," answered John.

"No, sir, naturally not, but if you should be able to see your way to helping my Lucy I'd do anything for you, sir."

"I am afraid I cannot afford it, Budge, and even if I could, I doubt whether I would be of any use. Look round this yard and count the people awaiting trial, and I'll be willing to bet two to one that most of them will be found guilty. I believe your sweetheart is held for murder."

"Yes, sir. But she didn't do it. If only I could afford a lawyer . . ." he murmured tearfully.

"Here's a guinea," said John, almost throwing a coin at him. "It won't be any use, but there it is."

He walked away quickly, leaving the drawer to mumble thanks at his back. On the way up

the stairs to Mary's landing he met a printer's boy and a naval officer who stopped him.

"Pardon me, sir," said the officer, "but I see you are in the East India Company's employment. Could you inform me when the *Northumberland* sails?"

"I do not know for certain, sir, since I have not been to Blackwall lately," answered John, "but I believe it is by to-morrow night's tide."

"Will she be in a convoy?"

"There again, sir, I am unable to tell you. But it is unlikely that she would join a convoy this side of Spithead. The Company do not advertise the movement of ships in time of war."

"I thank you," said the officer with a superior nod, and went his way.

Mary's cell looked out over the yard, and consequently had a somewhat larger window less heavily barred than those giving on the street. The furniture consisted only of a bed, a chair, and a very ricketty chest of drawers with a basin on the top. She was sewing when John came in, but put her work aside and stood up meekly.

"The lawyer has been again," she said. "And I told him I wouldn't tell any lies because I should get confused and they could trip me up. He told me that my story was as good as any other, although it has been used before, and he thought it was best for me to stick to what I had prepared rather than start learning something new."

"That's good, my dear. I didn't like the plan of filling you with a lot of lies and nonsense," answered John.

Sitting down on the bed he drew Mary to him and took her on his knee.

"We'll free you yet," he declared.

Mary shook her head.

"I'm still afraid. The turnkey says they didn't acquit anyone yesterday."

"Oh, they always start with the worst offenders," John assured her easily. "Highway-men and so forth before they come to doubtful cases."

"I wish I was a man," sighed Mary. "They say nearly all the men are being sent into the navy."

"I have my doubts whether they wouldn't rather be hanged once they've had a taste of a man-of-war. When they've been flogged twice they will certainly wish themselves back in Newgate," answered John.

"I'd rather be flogged than hanged," said Mary simply.

"You won't suffer either if I can help it, you poor, pretty, little angel. Give me a kiss," begged John. "I love you more than ever I did."

He kissed her and ran his fingers through her hair. Mary rested her head on his shoulder and put her arms round him.

"It's nice having a man, and knowing he'll do anything he can to save you. If I go free you will still be my man, won't you, even if you can't marry me?"

John suddenly stopped caressing her hair.

"We can never marry," he said simply.

"I know. It doesn't matter. You will always be able to come to me when you are home from the sea," she replied happily. "I'll never marry or have anything to do with any man except you."

Although there might be love making in the shadow of the gallows at Newgate, although the judges at the Old Bailey were trying to rush the cases and get verdicts as quickly as possible, Mr. Tibbles was unaware of these things. The previous evening John had come to see him, and after a somewhat halting apology had blurted out a desire for the hand of Georgina in marriage. It pleased Mr. Tibbles to find that old Adams was a man of his word and an expeditious performer. He had spoken no word of the intended union to Georgina, since he had not thought there was any hurry, and he liked to prepare his speeches well in advance. But now that the Adams family had made a move it behoved him to act at once. Accordingly the next morning he dressed with care, was shaved and powdered, and after a light breakfast off a chop and a glass of porter took himself to his study, where he assumed the attitude proper to the head of a family, and told the butler to request Miss Georgina's presence.

Georgina arrived ready dressed for her morning drive, or rather descent on harrassed shopkeepers. Her father begged her to be seated.

"My dear Georgina," began Mr. Tibbles, "I feel old age creeping on me, and many bitternesses beset me. Not only is all that I have

held great and noble being assailed by the vulgar mob, but even business is changing, and I regret to say I have suffered grievous loss. I must therefore think of the welfare of my beloved daughter."

Georgina felt decidedly uneasy. Was he going to cut down the staff, or even move into a smaller house?

"When I am gone," continued Mr. Tibbles in sepulchral tones, "my dearest daughters will be alone in a chaotic world where all the old institutions will be brought crashing to the ground by howling Jacobins. Civilisation may even cease to exist and our descendants lapse into primitive savagery and anoint their bodies with woad. It is my most earnest wish that you should be properly protected. I especially wish that you shall be spared the degradation of having to work."

"Work!" exclaimed Georgina in horror. "Oh! father, have you ruined us?"

"No, no, my dear," her father assured her. "Although I have had losses I flatter myself that I have concluded another transaction which will fully recoup me. But the world of commerce is seriously disordered, and I feel that no single gentlewoman will be able to rely on a secure income in the future. Since men are bred to affairs they can generally be trusted to look after their own interests. But how different is the case of ladies! Sweet, tender creatures, they are too delicate to withstand the rough buffets of business life which we men with our coarser natures can

ignore. Ladies, fairy visions framed for love, can never descend to the vulgar bear-garden of the Exchange."

"Father!" cried Georgina. "Pray be more explicit."

"It is the dearest wish of my heart that you should marry, my child," explained Mr. Tibbles. "I feel that single you will be unprotected against the deluge."

"Marry!" snorted Georgina. "I loathe men."

"Even if they love you?" asked her father. "Even if they have been struck by Cupid's fatal dart at their first meeting with you? Can woman be so unkind as to hate a lover?"

"Bah!" said Georgina.

"My sweet child, I have had a request, I may say an appeal, from one who loves you to distraction."

Georgina jerked herself straight in her chair and stared at her father.

"A suitor!" she gasped.

"A lover. One who burns to make you his," amended Mr. Tibbles. "A gallant young man who has already asked me for your hand in marriage."

Georgina's heart gave a bound, and she felt as though she were going to faint. She had abandoned all hope and hardened herself against the fickle male, but now she felt like a schoolgirl and wanted to giggle and blush.

"Romance," breathed Mr. Tibbles. "Youth and love."

"Father, how ridiculous you are," said Georgina, returning to her usual manner. "If some young man chooses to pay court in the proper way I am prepared to listen to him. Should he seem eligible I am even willing to consider matrimony. Who is the gentleman?"

"The younger Mr. Adams who was dining here the other evening."

Georgina frowned slightly.

"I think he is a trifle, shall I say, low?"

"No doubt his parentage is undistinguished, but we must remember that his family is immensely wealthy and he can support you in a proper manner," answered Mr. Tibbles. "Possibly the fact that he is certain to become the Commander of an Indiaman and so secure a huge fortune may remove any compunction which might be felt at marrying beneath one. I have known Nabobs who have formed unions with the scions of noble houses and can assure you the results have been most gratifying."

"I am not sure that I approve of a mere merchant sailor," said Georgina thoughtfully. "I agree that the wife sets the tone in the household and that a lady is not necessarily defiled by wedding a plebeian. But the gentleman in question seems unpolished, if not worse."

"I admit he is somewhat over-fond of pursuing pretty girls and at times, like his father, is a little apt to drink rather more than he ought. But then we must remember, firstly, what a bad example the Prince of Wales sets to young men, and secondly, the fact that after months of abstin-

ence at sea a sailor is somewhat apt to overstep the limits of sobriety when he sets foot on shore."

This second reason was scarcely a sound one, since by the rule of the Service a Second Mate could if he wished take six tons or fifteen hundred gallons of spirits to sea with him. But though Mr. Tibbles knew this very well his daughter did not, and she seemed to be softened by the argument.

"I admit, father, that Mr. Adams is no worse than any other gentleman, and that the male sex is incurably base in its habits. As you rightly observe, the Prince and his odious companions degrade the morals of their inferiors. The fact that Mr. Adams has indulged in gallantries towards other ladies will not prejudice me towards him if I am convinced he has a genuine regard for myself."

"He is madly in love," her father assured her. "I am sure that marriage with a young lady of superior standing will entirely reform any small vices he may possess."

"Then I am willing to listen to his advances," said Georgina rising. "I shall decide myself whether he is suitable."

She joined her sister in the carriage in a turmoil of suppressed excitement, while her father with a happy smile turned to deal with a mass of business between Adams and Son and himself.

Shortly afterwards old Adams called, and was admitted to the study by the butler, who had become absolutely obsequious in his manner.

At first the two gentlemen only discussed business and argued over the share of profits, at which work old Adams was a master and demolished all opposition to his own plans. Mr. Tibbles was perplexed and confused by the manner in which Adams raced through one transaction after another and settled in a moment questions which Tibbles would have taken a week to decide. Respectable and old-established firms were treated with scant respect by the bustling grocer. Unable to keep pace with his colleague, Mr. Tibbles assumed a fixed smile and sat back in his chair. He was not altogether sure that things were being done in a genteel way, but he was quite certain they were going to yield the maximum of profit. Adams saw at once he was dealing with a pliable fool, and knew that in future he would be able to get his will in all things.

When at last the work was done, Mr. Tibbles turned to other topics, and with an air of self-satisfaction said that he had persuaded his daughter to view the proposed marriage favourably.

"She's willing, is she?" grunted Adams. "Then the sooner the better. Jack won't be at home for ever. I'll send him round again before dinner. I think your East India stock would be the best thing for the settlement, and my son Harry must be one of the trustees. I hear the *Duchess of Bedford* is being surveyed by the Company to-day, so she ought to be ready for sea within two months."

"We must regard her tender feelings," urged Mr. Tibbles.

"Jack will see to that," replied Adams.

The grocer walked slowly back to his shop thinking that revolutions in foreign countries were by no means unmitigated evils. A little stirring up and reshuffling of affairs in England were very useful to a man who had his eyes open.

Soon after noon John, in his best uniform and primed with gin and parental advice, stood at Mr. Tibbles's door. The butler almost grovelled as he admitted him and showed him up to the parlour on the first floor.

The parlour was a bright, sunny room with pale wainscotting and delicately-coloured engravings on the wall. Chairs, tables and sofas looked to John too fragile and thin in the legs to support a grown man. Moved as much by prudence as by nervousness, he remained standing stiffly in the middle of the room until Georgina appeared.

Though not beautiful, Georgina was not downright ugly ; and on this occasion she had done her best to enhance what charms she possessed. Her skin was soft and free from blemishes, although her complexion was a little too pale for the fashion. Her hair was an indeterminate dark brown, but needed all the hairdresser's arts to make it curl and billow in the requisite manner. When a certain plumpness and roundness of limb were demanded by connoisseurs of beauty, she could only conform to their standards by judicious padding, and her arms remained a little too thin, though her hands

were well shaped and had not been coarsened by any work. Her cheeks were not plump enough, nor her mouth small enough, to attract gallants ; though her eyes were bright and of the right proportion, they were an unfashionable shade of grey.

Having been warned by a note from old Adams, her father, as soon as she returned from her drive, gently urged her to prepare for a suitor. A hairdresser had been summoned post haste, and after being curled, powdered and helped into her best dress of white silk, she was having the finishing touches added by her maid when John's arrival was announced. She believed this was the last chance she would ever have of marrying, and was fluttered enough not to reprove her maid for upsetting some powder over the floor.

John having been told by his father to pitch it strong and make a theatrical ass of himself, made a low bow as the door opened and Georgina sailed rustling into the parlour. After the lady had exchanged formal greetings with him he handed her to a chair with a flourish and wondered what the devil he was going to say next. There was a moment of silence, then Georgina, fearing that he might be nervous, determined to put him at his ease.

“ Mr. Adams, I fear I was a trifle ungracious towards you at our last meeting. I had a severe headache, and must beg you to excuse my disinclination to converse with you.”

“ Oh, very natural, very natural,” replied John. “ I hate company when I feel ill. Also, I’m afraid most of what I said would bore you.”

He wished he had taken a little more gin and had courage enough to carry the thing off with a rush. At all events the woman was not nearly so unpleasant as he had feared, and knew how to dress herself.

"Miss Tibbles," he began, taking the plunge, "although I only saw you for the first time at this house a day or two ago I must confess you made a very strong impression on me. You may think it strange that I should say this, but the impression was strong, very strong. I was impressed. Your undoubted beauty and high breeding, Miss Tibbles, made . . . I mean impressed me."

"Sir, you flatter me."

"Not in the least, Miss Tibbles, far from it, quite the contrary, I underestimate the condition of my feelings. Miss Tibbles, I was smitten by your beauty and high breeding, absolutely smitten!"

"Mr. Adams, I vow you are teasing me," simpered Georgina.

"No, damme, it's the truth," lied John, and brought his fist down with a bang on a small table, nearly splitting it. "Miss Tibbles, it is impossible to flatter you, and I should never take the liberty of teasing such a well-bred lady. Miss Tibbles, allow me to say you are the most beautiful creature I have ever seen. One glance from your eyes, Miss Tibbles, makes me feel quite giddy. Miss Tibbles, although you may call the servants and have me thrown out of the house, I cannot conceal the fact that I love you madly . . . madly, Miss Tibbles."

"Oh!" cried Georgina with a little shriek.
"Sir, you are very sudden."

"Sudden, Miss Tibbles, of course. I was suddenly overwhelmed with your beauty," exclaimed John, thinking it was not so difficult after all and she was behaving just the same as the lasses in the taverns. "Miss Tibbles, I love you passionately, not to say madly."

Georgina was sitting primly on one of the untrustworthy chairs, while John balanced himself cautiously on the edge of another. Feeling that things were reaching a critical stage, John dramatically fell on his knees, and firmly grasping one of Georgina's hands, continued :

"Miss Tibbles, I burn, actually burn, to make you mine. Is there no ray of hope, Miss Tibbles? Do you regard me only with feelings of loathing? Am I too unworthy to wed a Tibbles?"

"No, no," protested Georgina faintly.

"Then I may hope, Miss Tibbles?"

"Yes."

"Here goes," thought John to himself, and rising to his feet clasped the astonished lady to his bosom and kissed her savagely.

"Sir!" protested the half-crushed Georgina.

John thought this was an invitation for more, so, exerting a bear-like hug, he bent her back until her spine almost cracked, and kissed her again and again.

When he paused for breath he was surprised to find she had fainted.

CHAPTER VII

Two incidents caused rage and excitement among members of the Maritime Interest. The first, that the press gang had boarded the East Indiaman *Northumberland* when she was on the point of sailing and had taken the cream of her crew, although the Admiralty had given them protections to free them from impressment. The second, that the Company's surveyors had found extensive dry-rot in the *Duchess of Bedford*, and had refused to take her up for another voyage. In the first case the Court of Directors sent a strongly worded protest to the Admiralty in the hopes of getting some definite reply within six months, in the second, the Court invited the owners of the hereditary bottom to tender for another ship.

Old Adams was pleased because he would have the chance of using his connection with Tibbles at once, but was somewhat perplexed about the best arrangements for John. He had promised the boy a chief mate's berth and must find him one. Had the *Duchess of Bedford* not been condemned he would have put John in her and made him commander of the ship built on her bottom. But now his plans were disorganised. He had no wish to have his son hanging about for a year or more and getting into all

kinds of mischief while the new ship was being built. At the same time if he got him a chief mate's berth in another ship immediately she would not return in time for the launching and fitting out of the *Duchess of Bedford's* successor, and John would miss the chance of the command. Of course, commands could be bought for hard cash, but the worthy grocer made it a rule never to part with a farthing unless absolutely necessary. The only thing to do was to see how the land lay before making any definite schemes.

John had his mind fully occupied. Uppermost in his thoughts was the fact that he believed he had made it possible for the press gang to catch the *Northumberland* just as her complement was on board. The officer he had passed on the stairs at Newgate was probably in charge of the gang which effected the rich haul of prime seamen. No sailor worth having ever joined the navy of his own free will. However, nothing was to be gained by telling any of his associates what had occurred, and proving himself a fool.

Being engaged was likely to prove a troublesome affair. A man was left with little time of his own, and it was only by rising early that he managed to get any time at all with Mary in Newgate. The rest of his day was spent in escorting his future wife on shopping and other excursions, dining with her and being bored to distraction. He seemed seldom to be left alone with her for more than a few seconds, Amelia, her elder sister, always being primly present and sewing with an air of ill-concealed fury at a scrap

of embroidery. Amorous dalliance with any woman who was not downright hideous was always pleasant, and helped to pass away the time. It was his chief amusement when ashore. But now he was officially pledged to a lady he was denied all opportunities of practising the charming diversion with her, and hindered in his other pursuit. He had no conversation, and lost patience with the idle chatter of his betrothed.

After standing it for two days, on the third afternoon he appeared with tickets for Vauxhall Gardens. Amelia gave a loud sniff and protested the evenings were far too cold. John was immensely relieved.

"I am sorry you are unable to come, Miss Tibbles, but I assure you these early summer nights are very healthy."

"You misunderstand me, Mr. Adams," replied Amelia stiffly. "I shall, of course, come, but I shall derive no pleasure from the jaunt."

She stitched away madly and said no more.

Georgina expressed herself charmed with the proposal.

"I will wear my new India muslin and father shall put on his satin waistcoat," she said. "Dear Amelia can have my best Cashmere shawl."

Dear Amelia scowled.

The domestics were thrown into confusion by dinner being ordered early (though it was already cooking) and the special care needed to dress the ladies. Mr. Tibbles was put out of humour by having to sit down to dinner half an hour too early and being deprived of all chance of digesting

it with the aid of port afterwards. But he was restored to his usual temper as the meal progressed, half-cooked though it was, by the thought that he was being relieved of a daughter and must put up with the inconveniences of the process. At all events he could get a good supper at Vauxhall and doze in a box over a bottle.

There was just time for the gentlemen to have a few glasses of port while the ladies were putting on their hats and cloaks.

"I think, John," said Mr. Tibbles, "Georgina has mentioned the matter of a house."

"Yes, she wants one somewhere near Bond Street."

"I am afraid I do not approve. As a father I naturally shudder at the prospect of losing a beloved daughter, and dear Amelia will be very unhappy if left alone after all the years she has spent in the constant company of her sister. You will not be at home for more than a few months every other year. I think, therefore, you should choose a house near to this, so that Georgina can relieve the solitude of her existence by frequent visits to her parent and sister."

"My father thinks much the same," replied John. "He has his eye on a small house in Guildford Street."

"I trust your father's opinion on matters of property absolutely," said Mr. Tibbles graciously.

"Then let us consider the matter settled. You will live in Guildford Street. Possibly dear Georgina might like to have her sister to live with her while you are away."

"As she pleases," answered John carelessly. "But when I am home I would prefer Amelia to live here."

"She is a very unobtrusive girl who will efface herself in a moment if requested," pleaded Mr. Tibbles. "I am sure you would find her most useful in the home and could take the entire burden of running the household. That would give dear Georgina the opportunity of devoting every minute of the day to you."

"No doubt Miss Amelia has every virtue, but nevertheless, I am afraid two's company and three's none," answered John.

Mr. Tibbles sighed resignedly and had a last drink of his port as the butler announced the carriage.

Georgina was dressed in a wide-brimmed straw hat trimmed with ostrich feathers and ribbon and a cream satin pelisse, while Amelia wore an unfashionable black hat and was only protected from the night air she dreaded by a dark shawl. The ladies were handed into the coach, the gentlemen followed, and away they went to Vauxhall.

It was still too early for society to be present and, as John had anticipated, they had no difficulty in getting a box near the Rotunda where they could see the early strollers and listen to the music. Most of the company which passed before them consisted of shopkeepers and their families, officers looking for women, a few of the more expensive sort of prostitutes and idle young men who had nothing else to do.

Amelia sipping a cup of coffee viewed the whole scene with disapproval, and after fumbling in some deep recess in her attire, produced her usual piece of embroidery and a roll containing needles and thread. Mr. Tibbles with a whole bottle of port in front of him smiled magnanimously on the world and gave a passing prostitute a sly wink.

As the last bright colours of the sunset faded from the sky innumerable candles were lighted in festoons of coloured glass pots, while in the Rotunda lamps were set round the orchestra and beside the balcony where the singers stood. The crowd increased every moment, and women in the height of fashion mixed with bunchy old matrons and were ogled by young blades with unpowdered hair and huge neckcloths.

"Let us go for a stroll and see the illuminations," suggested John to Georgina.

Georgina rose with a smile and allowed herself to be escorted on to the gravel path. Mr. Tibbles wagged a roguish finger at John before he disappeared from view in the crowd. The gardens having many walks shaded from the main avenues by shrubs and evergreens, afforded opportunities for unlimited flirting no matter how crowded the broad walks might be. At the first opportunity John led his betrothed into one of these dark alleys.

"I am sure the grotto does not lie this way," protested Georgina.

"No matter," said John.

"But it does matter. I particularly wish to see the grotto," answered Georgina.

"We'll find it later," promised John, and put his arm round her waist. "Now we're here we might as well make the best of our time."

"No," cried Georgina as John embraced her, "not in public."

"I never get near you in private," observed John as he kissed her.

"You're so rough, you frighten me," gasped Georgina, but made no serious effort to free herself.

"If only your sister would keep away from the parlour we could do this more often," observed John after a few moments.

"Oh!" sighed Georgina.

"Drop a hint to her," suggested John.

"Oh! I'm in such a flutter," said Georgina, who was trembling.

"Send her out for a drive alone to-morrow," urged John.

"You're too ardent," murmured Georgina.

"Since we are going to marry we might at least get some pleasure out of it," grumbled John. "Amelia is a wet blanket."

"Poor Amelia, she will never marry."

"No, but we shall," replied John. "Can't she go on a visit to the country?"

"My dearest John is too impatient," said Georgina archly.

"At all events she isn't here now," muttered John, and once more hugged his betrothed.

When Georgina was able to speak again she

pointed out that they must go back to her father.

"We must have been away a long time, although it only seems a moment."

"Your father is happy enough," answered John. "And your sister is always miserable, so we might as well stay here."

But Georgina was insistent.

"I am sure it is not good for us to indulge our love too freely. We ought to remember our position."

"We haven't indulged at all yet," argued John. "Listen, I'll call on you to-night."

"Oh ! But father would think it strange if you came late."

"Your father won't be bothered. Get the key of the front door and lower it by a line from your window when you hear me whistle," John instructed her. "You'll hear the clocks strike midnight and I'll lurk about until I see you at the window."

"What a shocking suggestion !" cried Georgina. "No gentleman would propose such a thing. I know you are madly in love with me and I return your passion, but in a proper manner. How could you so far forget yourself as to make such an odiously vulgar proposition ? You must keep your love on a lofty plane as I do, and not allow unworthy thoughts to sully the complete harmony between our souls. Love is a dignified and proper thing between ladies and gentlemen when it is practised with due restraint. But to whistle outside houses at midnight . . . no, that is entirely base. I am aware that Romeo

visited Juliet on her balcony, but let us not try to copy the uncouth manners of our forefathers."

John gave an exasperated sigh.

"Very well, let us rejoin your father."

A celebrated soprano was singing from the balcony of the Rotunda to a heedless crowd below. A constant hum of conversation and crackling of feet on the gravel made her almost inaudible in the box where John found Mr. Tibbles well primed with port. Georgina, after complaining of the difficulty they had forcing their way through the crowd, affected to listen with rapt attention to the singing. John ordered supper and joined Georgina at the front of the box.

"You won't see very much of me when we're married," he said in a low voice. "I shall be at sea most of the time."

Georgina made no reply.

"Neither of us will be young when I retire," continued John.

The voice of the singer came clearer as the more musical part of the audience hushed the chatters. She was singing a love song.

"We are only young once and I shall be at sea within a week or two of our wedding. We might as well make the most of what time we have. If I get drowned or die of fever you won't have much to remember me by."

Georgina produced her handkerchief and dabbed at her eyes, but still said nothing. With a last despairing shriek the prima donna finished her song and stood cartwheeling at the applauding throng.

"Ah! Supper at last," exclaimed Mr. Tibbles, as a waiter entered with a large tray. "John, my boy, a magnificent spread."

All chance of further intimacies was lost. The party gathered round the table and ate their supper to the strains of one of Mr. Handel's compositions performed by the entire orchestra, including the organ. Mr. Tibbles, in high good humour, related his experiences at Bath two years previously, and gave a complete catalogue of all the titled persons then present. After supper there was nothing else to do except go home.

The ladies were handed into the coach, then Mr. Tibbles in an access of friendliness gave the coachman instructions to drive round by way of Holborn and to drop John at his house. On the way back he was as loquacious as ever and no one had a chance of stopping him. John sat silently with his back to the horses, while Georgina faced him, but it was too dark for him to signal with his eyes, and after a few ineffectual attempts to get into communication by a gentle pressure of the foot he lapsed into silent immobility. When the coach drew up outside the shop he managed to whisper "Midnight" to Georgina and then, after mutual leave-taking, went in by the side door.

Old Adams was taking things quietly, and was almost sober, although it was nearly ten o'clock. Hearing a step in the passage he put his head out of the dining-room door and discovered John listlessly wandering towards the parlour.

"Ah, Jack, I want to see you," he cried, "come and help your old father with the port."

John turned and obeyed. The dining-room was at the back of the house, and was panelled in dark wood with Dutch pictures of food and game hung on the walls. Being alone, old Adams was content with a single candle, which made the natural gloom of the room more pronounced as the feeble flame was unable to light the dull walls and time-blackened paintings.

"John, I think I have got a berth for you," announced old Adams. "I believe we shall be able to manage the chief officer's place in the *Clapham*."

"Excellent," said John. "I'm getting tired of the shore. This is the dullest spell I've had. Not a single spree."

"You must be married as soon as possible," continued his father. "I've arranged about that house in Guildford Street, and know a merchant who can do the furnishing very cheap. He'll allow me the greatest possible discount since I've had dealings with him before. You must find out what you will need and let me know."

"Can you get me a good cellar cheap?" asked John.

"My boy, you shall have three dozen of my own port," promised his father. "You have been very dutiful, and it's only proper I should make things as easy as possible for you. Tibbles tells me you and his daughter agree. That shows good sense on your part. You will have to live with the woman, so you might as well start friends. Business is turning out very satisfactory too, very satisfactory. We have just had some

convict ships accepted. This wedding is the best thing we ever arranged."

" Best for whom ? " asked John.

" Best for everyone. You will be kept steady when ashore and kept away from the poxy whores, as well as being sure of a good, comfortable home and income. Tibbles and I will gain wealth, and his daughter get a husband who is better than a woman her age deserves. Oh ! It is a good thing for everyone. Now you are almost certain of a post you must think seriously about your own private trade. The *Clapham* will be going to China direct, so I advise you to ship goods which will be easily sold in Canton. I, believe vermillion has a good sale there, and novelties such as clocks and mechanical toys are popular. If the Company ships one thing you ought to ship another so the market won't be flooded. I'll let you know what to ship for the voyage home before you sail. It will depend on how this war affects the India market. I should think a ton or two of china ware is a certain sale."

" I'll find out what is best from the next ship in."

" Very wise, my boy. The *Lord Sandwich* has arrived in the Downs and ought to be in the river soon," said the old man, and fumbled for his watch. " Hum. It's time we were in bed. Past ten."

" I'll sit up a little longer. I'm not tired," remarked John.

" As you please, but you can't have another bottle of port," answered his father. " Good night."

"Good night."

Shortly before midnight John slipped out of the side door, taking the key with him. It was a fine starlight night, and he had little difficulty in finding his way through the badly lit streets. Posting himself in the shadow of some trees opposite Mr. Tibbles's house he waited anxiously and watched the dark windows for the slightest sign of a lamp or candle. Midnight struck, and the cry of the watchman echoed through the deserted streets. John whistled. The house remained dark and silent as the minutes passed. John whistled again, but no chink of light appeared.

"Damn the woman," he exclaimed, and went home.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE were hangings at Newgate. A huge crowd filled the street by the prison, and houses opposite had all their windows filled and even their roofs covered with spectators. Round the gallows, which consisted of a horizontal beam supported at each end, there were arrayed tip-staves and the sheriff's officers, as well as the hangman and a chaplain. Weaving their way through the throng were ballad sellers, beggars, hawkers of refreshments, religious fanatics and pickpockets. Stolid fathers of families had brought their younger children for a treat which was not without its educational value. For weeks afterwards they would be able to threaten the infants with a felon's death on earth and eternal torments hereafter if they were disobedient or refractory.

The din was terrific. Ballad sellers with lungs of brass were singing fortissimo the last dying confessions of the criminals to the tunes of popular airs. Vendors of gingerbread, oranges, and other wares yelled their cries in rivalry with the whistles and catcalls of the idle apprentices and loafers, the screams of children who had not a good view of the gallows, the thundering exhortations of the religious faction, and the shrill screams of laughter from the wenches as they

exchanged repartee with the loafers. Dogs barked as the great bell began to toll.

At the appearance of the condemned a mighty roar arose from the mob. Those who recognised the particular malefactors booed and hissed or cheered them according to whether they admired or despised their crimes. A woman and two men were led to the place of execution between two lines of guards, their hands were bound and they wore white cotton nightcaps. They were ranged on planks under the gallows, where the whole concourse could see them ; then the caps were pulled down over their faces, the ropes adjusted, and, amid another deafening roar from the crowd, the planks removed from under their feet.

The last convulsive jerks of the writhing criminals were the subject of some comment by regular attendants at executions. A stout lady who had to refresh herself repeatedly with little nips of gin from a small flask said it was most improper to hang a woman so high. The poor sufferer had shown part of her legs as she kicked.

John, who had been unable to get into the prison on account of the crowd, waited to watch the executions. He realised they would be a heart-rending sight if Mary happened to be one of the victims, and reproached himself with not taking more active steps to help her. The lawyer had prepared a defence strictly on the lines of Mary's evidence and had arranged for the hire of witnesses of good character, but he was not very sanguine as to the result. While he was

musing he felt a tug at his arm, and turned to see the surgeon with whom he had shared a boat from Blackwall.

"So the *Duchess of Bedford* is condemned and I am out of employment," said the surgeon sadly.

"Good morning, Doctor Hill. I see they are making subjects for your fellow surgeons to dissect," remarked John.

"They hang the wrong people," replied Dr. Hill. "If only they would rise superior to pettifogging legal details and make a start on purging the body politic of a few malignant growths. Fox would be a good beginning. I'd come miles to see that shifty rogue hanged."

"If you wish to relieve us of the politicians you might as well scrag the lot," opined John. "But what brings you to a hanging?"

"Idleness, Adams, idleness. The *Duchess* is condemned and I am unable to get another post."

"I'll see if I can do anything. I'm almost certain of the chief mate's berth in the *Clapham*."

"I should be most eternally obliged to you if you could," replied Hill. "I am too old to try my fortune ashore, and my constitution benefits enormously from the sea air. No doubt the earthy humours in my body would gain the ascendancy if it were not for the watery element. Again life on shipboard is full of diversity and interest, and I could not stomach having to attend ugly old women in a country practice or have little to do but help in the delivery of infant yokels. Also, I did a good trade in bringing home drugs."

"Damme, you're a doctor!" exclaimed John, after a moment's thought.

"I am glad you have discerned the fact at last. Possibly any slight duties I have performed in our last ship escaped your distinguished notice," said Hill with an offended air.

"Yes, but as a doctor you can swear to pregnancy. If I do all I can to get you a berth will you swear the girl is pregnant, no matter by whom?" asked John eagerly.

"What the devil are you raving about? What girl, and why should she be pregnant?"

"There's a girl in the prison here who's been arrested for theft," explained John. "If she's found guilty I don't want her to hang. If she's pregnant they will reprieve her, therefore, you swear she's pregnant and she will live."

"If she's a friend of yours I should think there is no doubt in the matter," replied Hill. "I am willing to swear it if you can find me employment."

"Meet me at the Black Boy coffee house in Fleet Street to-morrow at noon," said John. "I'll let you know then if I can get you a berth."

The crowd had almost dispersed, although a few still lingered to have the pleasure of seeing the authorities cut down the dangling corpses. John went to the prison and was admitted.

The landing outside the editors' cells was blocked by a large group of gentlemen who had been delayed by the hangings. Whigs and Tories were in acrimonious debate on a number of topics, while the printers' boys stood by with

bundles of proofs. John slipped past quietly for fear of any more naval officers trying to get crews through his indiscretions.

Mary was very despondent. She had heard the bell toll and the uproar of the crowd, and felt that death was creeping nearer and nearer. John's cheerfulness did little to raise her spirits.

"I've got a surgeon who is prepared to swear you're pregnant," said John. "But for a number of reasons, my dear, I think it would be best if you conceal the name of the supposed father."

"I'll do whatever you tell me," promised Mary without enthusiasm.

"I shall be going to sea soon," continued John, "and I'd like to know you're safe before I go."

"Oh ! You're not going yet ?" cried Mary in alarm. "Where shall I be without you ?"

"Another month before I go," answered John.

"The turnkey says I shall be tried before then. Oh ! This is a terrible place, and everyone here is going to die soon."

"You'll live," said John easily. "Don't doubt it."

"If I do I shall owe my life to you, and all the time I have been here you have kept me comfortable and prevented me thinking too much. But now they are hanging people and I can hear the crowd cheering. I wish you could be with me and hold me when there are hangings. I am afraid alone."

"They won't let me in," explained John,

"otherwise I should come. But now never mind about prison. Give me a kiss."

John left the prison early in order to catch his father and try to make interest for Doctor Hill. It was not a long walk from Newgate to Holborn, and he was just descending Snow Hill when he met the drawer from the coffee house trudging towards him. The young man stopped and bowed to John, who gave him a friendly nod and would have passed on had not the other put out a hand and stopped him.

"Mr. Adams, sir, my poor Lucy will be tried soon, and I can do nothing to help her."

"Nor can I, Budge," answered John.

"I think you can, sir," answered the drawer with a cunning look. "I believe I have heard you are helping another young lady, sir."

"I don't see what business that is of yours," replied John stiffly.

"I've found out you are engaged to Miss Tibbles, sir, the daughter of the gentleman who took me up so quick when I asked you a question about India," continued the drawer. "Now, sir, I don't like being treated like that, and I don't like the idea of poor Lucy being in prison with no one to help her. Now, suppose, sir, you helped her . . ."

"Damn it, man, there are hundreds of felons in Newgate who need help," exclaimed John. "I'm not the Bank of England. People must take the consequences of their own actions. I have troubles enough of my own to consider without being bothered by you."

He would have walked on, but Budge again laid a hand on his arm.

"It might bother you, sir, if Miss Tibbles heard you were keeping one of her servants in Newgate, sir," insinuated Budge.

"That is your game, is it?" said John slowly.

"It is, sir, I'm sorry to say," replied Budge with a grin. "I can do nothing for Lucy, but you might."

"Hum!" grunted John, with a murderous look in his eye. "You are no use to her, are you?"

"No, sir. A man with money might be."

John suppressed an almost overwhelming desire to knock the fellow down and jump on him. But he realised caution was necessary. After a moment he had a sudden inspiration.

"Well, Budge, I'm not going to discuss this in a public street," he said briskly. "I have business to do now and cannot afford to be late. I'll see you in the Anchor Tavern on Tower Hill two hours hence."

"I'm sure we can come to an agreement, sir," smiled Budge. "Thank you, sir, I'll be there without fail in two hours."

He gave John a low bow and hurried on up the hill.

John almost ran all the way to his father's shop, and was immensely relieved when he found the old man in his counting house quietly doing his day's business.

"Father, can I get a surgeon's berth for the former surgeon in the *Duchess of Bedford*, a first-

rate man who cured me of a very dangerous fever?" asked John breathlessly.

"Fever, you never told me you had fever," grumbled his father. "I suppose you think you've got the right of living and dying without letting your father know a word. As for a berth, I advise you to see Mr. Puddock."

"Puddock!" repeated John.

"Yes, Puddock, the managing owner of the *Clapham*," snapped his father, "who, by the way, wrote this morning confirming your appointment. It's no use your going to see him now, he'll be busy, but after noon you might catch him in a favourable temper. I'll send a note by one of the boys saying you are coming. Have you seen your intended to-day?"

"No, I am not expected," lied John.

"You must go there now," said his father. "She is making a lot of trouble over this house. In a note her father says she has set her mind on Piccadilly or St. James's or some such nonsense. We may be a vulgar crowd but we do know our places, and don't try to live with the quality. If that woman once gets a house in a fashionable quarter she will infallibly ruin you. So it's essential you should knock this senseless vanity out of her head."

"I'll do my best," said John. "Time is short, so I'll go at once."

He hurried out of the shop in a state of apprehension. He could not afford to be late for his appointment at the Anchor Tavern. To make sure he hailed a hackney coach and bade the

driver go as fast as possible to Mr. Tibbles's. On the way there he tried to think of arguments for persuading Georgina to live in Guildford Street. This marriage was proving a sore burden in many ways, and he heartily wished himself free of his obligations.

Georgina and her sister were in their usual chairs in the drawing-room when John was shown in. After the briefest of greetings John turned to the business in hand.

"Georgina, my dear, I have to be in the City shortly on matters of importance, so I cannot stay long," he warned her. "But I must tell you that it is quite absurd for people of our position to think of living among rich and influential people. I shall not have enough income for the next ten years to support you in an extravagant manner, and we must cut our coat according to our cloth. Therefore, my dear, I must insist on our living in Guildford Street when we are married. We can move elsewhere when we have the means to afford it."

"Indeed," said Georgina loftily. "I shall not . . ."

"I am sorry I can stay no longer," interposed John. "But the coach is waiting. I have already agreed to buy the house and the deed cannot be undone. I shall see you later. Good morning."

He ran down the stairs thinking he had got out of the difficulty very cleverly, and jumped into his coach to settle the other affair.

Budge, after commiserating with his Lucy and

agreeing for the hundredth time that it was entirely his fault she was in Newgate, told her he was getting help, and outlined his method of blackmailing John. He suggested that if necessary they could father the dead child on to the victim, but after some discussion Lucy found that John had only been home a short while, and the plan was, therefore, useless. Lucy, an anæmic little servant who had let her bastard die out of sheer ignorance, was thoroughly frightened at her plight, as she had good reason to be, but she was also in terror of her betters. When Budge began enlarging on the wealth and importance of the Adams and Tibbles families she was disturbed and thought there might be dreadful dangers ahead of anyone who provoked such people. There were, but Budge was too overcome with self-satisfaction to listen to her warnings. He assured her everything would turn out exactly as he wished, and that he could get as much money as they needed for the defence. If they did not John would be ruined in his matrimonial schemes. The plan could not fail to succeed.

With a light heart and whistling blithely Budge walked through the City, and in due time arrived in Tower Street a little earlier than necessary. Even if he had been earlier still he would not have escaped. He had just got to the end of the street, which contained only some women and passing drays, when a woman waved at him. Mistaking her intention he purposely looked the other way.

“Hawks,” cried the woman hoarsely.

He heard steps running behind him, and even as he turned they were upon him. A brawny sailor clutched him round the waist while another swung a thick cudgel menacingly in front of his nose.

"Are you coming quietly?" asked the sailor.

"What? Why?" stammered Budge.

"You can't say I didn't warn you," said the woman, coming up to him.

More sailors and a naval lieutenant in rather a shabby uniform surrounded him.

"Not what I should call a man," remarked the lieutenant, after bestowing a contemptuous glance on the press gang's capture. "However, a man-of-war, like the gallows, refuses nothing. Take him away."

Budge gave a yell of horror and struggled unavailingly. With an awful sinking in his stomach he realised he was never likely to see his Lucy again. He allowed himself to be led away, weeping and bewailing the fact he had ever crossed a sailor.

Having bestowed Budge along with their other captures in a smack lying alongside Tower Wharf, the press gang adjourned to the Anchor Tavern, where John gave them a guinea to drink his health.

It was no great distance from Tower Hill to Leadenhall Street, where Mr. Puddock had his office as near as possible to East India House. When John had at last taken leave of the naval ratings who had freed him from the blackmailer he walked up Mark Lane ~~hastily~~. He found

the clerks in the outer office obliging and civil at the sight of a Maritime Service uniform. The head clerk on hearing his name smiled and expressed a pious wish that Mr. Adams would have a long and fruitful connection with their firm.

"I hope so," answered John. "Tell me, is there any hope of my getting a berth for the former surgeon of the *Duchess of Bedford*? He is astonishingly skilful and has saved my life on two occasions."

"I expect Mr. Puddock would consider the matter, Mr. Adams. He will be able to see you in a few moments."

John spent the time chatting with the clerks about the state of trade generally, and the possible results of the war. Lounging on their high stools and making gestures with their pens, the clerks treated John as an equal, and told him exactly what he ought to load for his private trade and the best houses to buy it from. Unfortunately no two agreed on the type or quantity of the goods he was to ship, and they fell arguing amongst themselves over the reports other officers had brought in. John, who had never been on a China voyage, listened carefully, and made notes of questions to ask his father. The sudden tinkle of a bell silenced the clerks in a second, and all turned to their desks and began writing furiously.

"Have the goodness to step this way, Mr. Adams," said the chief clerk.

John was shown into a lofty but gloomy room hung with pictures of East Indiamen. Each

picture showed what appeared to be three ships, but in actual fact were meant to be three aspects of the same vessel. Mr. Puddock sat at a large mahogany desk with another smaller desk for a clerk beside it.

"Good morning, or rather good afternoon, Mr. Adams," he said genially. "So you are carrying off the fair Miss Tibbles! Well, well, I am sure you will both be very happy."

"Thank you, sir."

"Sit down, I beg you," requested Mr. Puddock. "I understand you have a friend a surgeon who desires a post."

"Yes, sir. A most skilful man, possibly the only doctor who is reliable. He has three times saved my life when I have been at death's door with fever."

"Indeed! He must be a ~~sound~~ man, and it was unfortunate the *Duchess of Bedford* was not taken up for another voyage. ~~I~~ I can offer him a post with you in the *Clapham*. The present incumbent is a raw youth quite unfitted for his post. If you will send your friend here to-morrow I will interview him."

"Thank you, sir," said John sincerely. "I am most anxious he should be employed."

"I admire your sense of gratitude. But to turn to business, you must start work next week. You will find the lower masts in and bowsprit stepped, and I must have the ship fully rigged and with sails bent a fortnight from to-day," directed Mr. Puddock briskly. "You must get married as soon as possible."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"You will be taking out copper, lead, piece goods, gunpowder, in fact, a general cargo of the usual description which it is important should reach its destination as soon as possible. The second officer will attend to matters for the present and superintend the loading of part of the cargo, but I cannot grant you unlimited leave of absence. So go and get married and then to sea."

"Whatever you wish, sir."

"You may sleep ashore until a day or two before sailing," conceded the owner. "But you must be aboard by eight o'clock in the morning."

"You can trust me, sir."

Ten minutes later John left the office and went at once to Doctors' Commons to get a special licence for his wedding.

CHAPTER IX

CONSTERNATION and disorder reigned in Mr. Tibbles's house. Milliners, drapers, tradesmen and relatives besieged the door, filled the staircase and even found their way into the study. John, the cause of the uproar, seemed quite unperturbed by the effect of his announcement that the wedding must take place on the morrow. In vain Georgina pleaded for time, inexorable duty made the bridegroom insist on immediate marriage. Mr. Tibbles pointed out that the house in Guildford Street was unfurnished, the sale not completed, and no servants yet engaged. John merely answered that his leave would terminate at the end of the week, and his future father-in-law was forced to capitulate. Lawyers were put to work, conveyancers burrowed into piles of dusty precedents, and the quills of clerks traced flourishes and whirls on parchment. However hasty the marriage, old Adams insisted on a proper settlement being drawn up.

Georgina was reduced to a state of trembling exasperation. She was thwarted at every turn. The sempstresses cut her garments wrongly, the mantua-maker ran out of material and was unable to find a fresh supply to match ; and finally, to add the last straw to her burden, she was informed that she would have to live over the Holborn

shop until her house was ready. It was the idea of being connected with retail trade which roused her fury. As soon as her father made the announcement, standing judiciously in the middle of the drawing-room, she lost all self-control.

"I will not live in Holborn ! How dare you suggest such a thing !" she cried. "To tell your own daughter to forget all breeding and frequent low company. I absolutely refuse to continue with this marriage if this is how I am to be treated. Bah ! A shop ! "

"My dear !" exclaimed her father.

"Dear ! Ha, ha," retorted Georgina with a sort of majestic fury. "I must be very dear if I am to be degraded in this fashion. I suppose I shall be given a shawl and pattens and set to sweeping out the shop."

Mr. Tibbles capitulated. Anxious as he was to be rid of his daughter, he dared not insist on what he secretly acknowledged to be a sad come-down for the family honour.

"Very well, my dear," he said soothingly. "Since you are so strongly determined not to go, you need not. Possibly you will make your own arrangements." He gave a formal bow and left the room. He washed his hands of the whole tiresome business and wished it were over. In the hall he was seized by Amelia and had to listen to a long tirade against the cook. Escaping at last, he sought his study and locked the door.

John arrived to find Georgina triumphant after her victory over her father, and was immediately attacked himself. The wedding dress was not

ready, half the guests would be unable to come, few presents had arrived, it was impossible to serve a wedding breakfast at such short notice, and, in short, a postponement was essential.

"Quite impossible, my dear," said John casually. "It doesn't matter two straws whether there are any guests or not, or what you wear. The only thing which is essential is a parson."

"I refuse to be wedded as though I were a mere servant marrying a groom," retorted Georgina. "I insist on being treated with the respect due to my station, and on being accorded the proper ceremonies and observances."

"Circumstances alter cases," argued John. "There is no time for trifles. Had I longer leave you could have arranged a procession to St. Paul's, or where you wished, but time is short, and outward show must go by the board."

"I refuse to regard the proper ritual of marriage as trifles," declared Georgina. "I shall be married as a lady, with proper dignity. There will be scarcely time, but it can just be arranged if we wed on Sunday."

"We are going to be married to-morrow," said John wearily. "I shall be at the church at the hour arranged. If you are not there I shall presume that you do not wish to be married."

"I refuse!" cried Georgina. "I will not be crossed in this fashion. It is all a conspiracy to deprive me of my proper position. Nothing will induce me to abase myself to the level of your vulgar family. I was born a lady and I shall not

allow myself to be bullied and thwarted by a mere tradesman's son."

" You will either be at the church to-morrow," said John sternly, " or you will spend the rest of your days as a bad-tempered old maid whom everyone sneers at. Those are my last words. Good morning."

He walked quickly out of the room and slammed the door behind him.

As he walked towards Fleet Street he firmly resolved never to give in to the woman, and thought it was a pity that she was certain to be at the church punctually on the morrow. The whole idea of marriage seemed more repulsive the nearer it approached actuality. In an ideal world a man would be greeted by a crowd of nymphs of incredible loveliness as soon as he got ashore, and they would minister to his every want with charming grace until it was time to go back to sea. A quarrelsome and conceited wife of no great beauty was about as big a curse a man could have, and was barely worth the money. By the time he got to the coffee house he had worked himself up into a state of brooding ill-humour. Dr. Hill, who was waiting for him, diagnosed spleen at a glance, and hoped it did not mean John had been unsuccessful in making interest for him.

John sat down sulkily in front of the Doctor and shouted for the drawer. An elderly man shambled up.

" What will you take, Hill ? Hollands ? Very well, drawer, Hollands and rum."

"At once, sir. I'm sorry you had to wait, sir, but we are one short this morning. Young Budge has not appeared," said the drawer.

"Never mind Budge. You won't see him again," said John surlily. "Get me my drink."

"Were you successful?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes, go and see Puddock in Leadenhall Street," answered John. "Tell him you've saved my life a dozen times."

"Are your bowels regular?" asked Hill professionally. "It may be a costive complaint."

"What?"

"You show signs of spleen, but, as I said, it may be a costive complaint."

"It isn't either," said John, smiling in spite of himself. "The fact is I'm getting married to-morrow to a woman who will argue and try to play the fine lady."

"Ah, then it's spleen due to intense aggravation," opined the Doctor. "However, in the long run the constant irritation may have beneficial results and prevent the system from becoming sluggish. I think marriage on the whole does the patient more good than harm."

The drawer brought the drinks and set them before them.

"Your very good health and that of the lady," said the Doctor. "Accept also my tardy thanks for the chance of employment. But tell me about this marriage. Is it with the pregnant lady?"

"No. I wish it was."

"Then it is for interest rather than affection," hazarded the Doctor. "A sound choice, for all

of us are prone to tire of women, but the love of money never flags."

"Come to Newgate with me on your way to Leadenhall Street," suggested John. "You can then see the girl I like best."

"Certainly. If I approve of her I will arrange for the reversion to myself after your nuptials."

"No you won't," retorted John.

"Ah! How I envy you young men who have strength enough to manage two strings to your bows."

During their walk the Doctor discoursed learnedly on all the drugs he proposed to buy in China if he got a berth in the *Clapham*. Although not a Chinese drug, he discussed the properties of opium, and swore it was the finest thing in the world for every complaint.

At Newgate the Doctor favoured Mary with his lowest bow and most engaging smile. She had risen and was standing near the barred window when the men arrived ; the light enhanced her delicate complexion, which alone made the Doctor envy John's good fortune in securing such a prize. These young men grabbed everything, leaving the middle-aged only a few worthless crumbs and rejected morsels.

"This is the young lady who I am to swear is quick by you ?" inquired Hill.

"There's no need to ask who's the father," answered John. "All you've got to say is that she's pregnant."

"If she would be so kind as to disrobe I could make a full examination," said the Doctor.

"I dare say you could, but that's not in the bargain," retorted John. "All you've got to do is to swear to it whether she is or not."

"My professional honour will not admit of perjury," objected the Doctor.

"I've lied to get you a berth," said John. "So you can lie to save Mary's life. Besides, if you don't look you won't know whether you're telling the truth or not, and can give yourself the benefit of the doubt."

"Your logic, though uncouth, is not without force," admitted the Doctor. "I must admit I have diagnosed on far more slender evidence than the present. In truth, the fact that the young lady is a friend of yours is an almost overwhelming proof of pregnancy."

"I have not been home very long, so you must keep my name out of it," said John. "The other side could prove there was not enough time to be sure if they knew I was to blame."

"You may leave the case entirely in my hands and trust my discretion," the Doctor assured him. "We will start to-morrow with some good emetics, and I'll wager my honour I can bubble the prison surgeon into supporting my evidence."

Reluctantly, the Doctor took his leave, after John had dropped a broad hint on the desirability of seeing the owner of the *Clapham*.

"Are you sure he'll save me?" asked Mary, as soon as he had gone.

"Perfectly," replied John with confidence.

"Then I shan't mind the noise of the hangings so much," said Mary with a sigh of relief.

"It will help you to keep your spirits up," agreed John. "But I'm sorry to say, Mary, I must go back to work and will not be able to come and see you very much after to-day."

Mary gave a little cry.

"I shall be alone!"

"Doctor Hill will visit you, and whenever I get a chance of slipping away from Blackwall I'll come; that is, until we sail, which will not be for three weeks or so."

"They will try me before then," said Mary with a shudder. "Are you sure I shall be spared? I don't know what I shall do without you. You promise you will come as often as you can?"

"Yes, whenever I get the chance," John assured her. "I dare say I shall be able to leave things to the other officers now and then. Don't fret and worry over your condition. They'll either let you off altogether or else, if you are found guilty, reprieve you."

"Are you sure they will believe the Doctor?"

"Yes, the old rogue. Don't allow yourself to be taken in by his plots to bed you."

"What!" exclaimed Mary. "A doctor try to do that!"

"He will," said John. "But repulse him kindly so as not to annoy him."

"I'd never give in to him," declared Mary.

"My constant little angel!" cried John, and embraced her.

He did not leave the prison until the hour when all visitors had to go and the prisoners

were locked in for the night. Mary wept at their parting and made him promise again to come and see her as often as he could.

The Adams family were about to sit down to dinner when John arrived home. His mother from her end of the table started a querulous condemnation of unpunctuality.

"Never mind," interposed old Adams, when he heard as much as he could stand. "If the boy is late on the eve of his wedding it is of no consequence. I suppose he has been drinking with his friends."

"Nice ways you've taught him with your filthy habits," grumbled the wife of his bosom. "Swilling and gormandising."

"Neither hurts anyone but the swiller and gormandiser, while a whining woman is a pest to all within earshot," retorted her husband.

"A nice way to talk to a good wife who's always done all she can to make a great fat brute happy without getting a word of thanks," remarked his wife. "A poor life Miss Tibbles will find it if her husband takes after his father, which he will, I dare swear."

John mentally vowed that if his wife was as much given to nagging and snivelling as his mother he would certainly give her cause for complaint.

"The boy is used to having his orders obeyed," said old Adams. "He'll be a fool if he doesn't take his quarterdeck manner home with him. If you ever read your Prayer Book you will find that wives promise to obey their husbands. There-

fore I command you to leave this room and let my sons and myself drink our wine in peace."

Mrs. Adams retired, muttering, as was her wont. She always tried to stay after the dessert, and was invariably ordered out by her husband.

Henry, who had affected to disregard the whole incident, lifted a languid hand.

"To your wedded bliss, Jack."

"Aye, God send better luck to Jack than I've had," grumbled old Adams as he drank. "Have sons, Jack, they are some compensation."

"I cannot honestly say this household proves the saying 'marriages are made in heaven,'" remarked John.

"They're not," replied his father. "They're made in the counting-house, where they ought to be. Your maternal grandfather had interests in the sugar trade, while my father's was in tea and coffee, so we sweetened the brew and you two are the result. Not a bad result, my boys, although it took some stirring to produce you. Harry will find a banker's daughter, I hope."

"She will have to be younger than I am," said Henry. "John's wife is older than he is and will soon fade. However, he can always find beauty elsewhere, at a price."

"So long as she breeds it makes no odds," opined old Adams.

"I suppose we shall get used to being together," said John hopefully.

"The more children you have the less trouble she will be to you," continued his father, developing his philoprogenitive theme. "When they

are young she will be fussing and fidgeting over them and leave you in peace. As they grow older the boys will be good company for you and the girls help in household matters. If it wasn't for trade and raising families there would be no rhyme or reason in marriage, and men would live like Turks with a harem, buying and selling favourites in the open market according to changes in their fancy. I dare say Turks get some pleasure out of it ; but their home life must be very different from ours."

" Not so very different from that of certain high personages in this country," said Henry. " I think we ought to drink Jack's health again for enabling us to get a footing in a new branch of business."

" Aye ! Jack and the Maritime Interest !" cried old Adams, lifting his glass.

" I'm damned if I'd marry the woman, even for that," muttered Henry.

John, who had been brooding on the numerous disadvantages of marriage and the pleasures of Mary's company, acknowledged the toast absently.

" Don't take it to heart, boy," pleaded his father. " After all, you will be happy enough if you go the right way about it. You will have a home of your own to go to, and the law will allow you to beat a refractory wife, so long as the stick is no thicker than your thumb and the chastisement is not excessive. Be king in your own castle and you'll be happy. We all like ruling, and marriage gives us a chance of ruling as large a nation as we can make."

"I shan't be at home very much, which is a comfort," said John.

"A comfort! An advantage," corrected his father. "Your wife will positively welcome your presence when you are home. You can admonish the children—reduce expenditure by seeing the tradesmen—in confidence we don't heed female complaints—and prepare further increases in the family."

"What if there are no children?" asked John.

"Then it'll be a pity, no, a tragedy," answered his father. "If she proves barren pension her off and set up another establishment. No one minds a bastard these days."

"Give her some of our cheap tea and poison her," suggested Henry.

"Acquit yourself well to-morrow night and leave the rest to Providence," advised his father.

CHAPTER X

THE wedding day was fine and a cool breeze tempered the heat of the sun. Mrs. Adams in black silk with a hooped skirt and a complicated lace cap under a black straw hat joined her husband and sons in the coach hired for the occasion and drove to a stucco church. Old Adams in his best suit fidgeted uncomfortably during the drive and speculated on the excellence of the spread Tibbles would provide after the ceremony.

“ It ought to be good as I have not invited any guests, and Tibbles likes to make a show. The fewer the better the fare, I hope.”

“ He has bought plenty from us at special discount,” said Henry.

“ Then it ought to be worth all this bother and fuss,” decided his father.

While the Adams family were getting ready, the Tibbles family were severally in utter despair. Mr. Tibbles had dressed early and was driven to desperation by Georgina’s conduct. The wedding dress, having arrived after an all-night effort by the sempstress, failed to please the bride, who vowed it was ill-cut and did not fit. She refused to be married so hurriedly, declared she was being sold into degradation, and dissolved in hysterics, to the grim satisfaction of Amelia.

Her father found her dressed in her underclothes, lying on her bed and shrieking, while two harassed maids and the sempstress tried to coax her into her dress.

"I shall drive you to the church as you are, if you insist on this ill-bred and unworthy conduct," stormed Mr. Tibbles, when all blandishments failed.

"Perhaps it would be unwise to continue the match," suggested Amelia.

"She has given her word and must proceed, whether it pleases you or not," answered her father coldly. "Georgina, I order you to dress at once. If you disobey the penalty will be terrible. I shall disgrace you publicly."

"How brutal!" cried Amelia.

Georgina sobbed and made no reply.

"Silence, miss," commanded Mr. Tibbles. "Rise at once and dress. Amelia, you will leave the room and refrain from further impertinences to your father. I shall not overlook your conduct, and will deal with the matter later."

Georgina buried her face in the pillow and clutched the bedclothes, while Amelia stalked out of the room in a fury.

"I won't marry a man who treats me like that . . ." sobbed Georgina, screwing round her head.

"It is woman's duty to obey," replied her father. "You must obey me now and your husband after the wedding. For the last time I order you to dress."

"It doesn't fit."

"Oh ! sir, I swear it does," interposed the sempstress. "I've worked my fingers to the bone finishing it and making it perfect."

"There, miss," thundered Mr. Tibbles. "You are not only disobedient but untruthful into the bargain. Dress this minute."

Georgina saw further resistance was hopeless and allowed herself to be helped from the bed. Mr. Tibbles, watch in hand, remained in the room, although delicate hints were thrown at him by Georgina.

"We shall be late," observed the gentleman while his daughter's hair was still being dressed. "Finish that as quickly as possible," he ordered the maids.

Unkempt and miserable, Georgina was bundled downstairs with the maids in hot pursuit to keep her train out of harm and put the finishing touches to her veil. Amelia was summoned, bouquets distributed, and the party set off at a round trot for the church.

Only a few intimate friends were present ; Mr. Puddock and his wife, Mr. Wilson and his wife, and about a dozen assorted relations. John, with Henry for best man, stood by the rail, while old Adams and his wife occupied the front pew on the north side. The bride, with Amelia as bridesmaid, advanced up the aisle ; the organist received a nod from the parson, and the service began.

In the vestry afterwards the two fathers signed the register, shook hands and exchanged looks of boundless relief. Coaches drove up to the church

door, the drivers wearing favours and the horses decked with ribbons ; and in pairs, headed by the bride and bridegroom, the company drove to the house. The butler, marshalling a staff of temporary footmen in ill-fitting liveries, was bursting with importance, and announced the guests in a voice of thunder. After standing side by side and grinning feebly at the compliments showered on them, the happy pair descended to the dining-room, where the breakfast was laid.

Old Adams smiled with joy when he saw that the meal was going to fulfil his most sanguine expectations. Conversation lagged at first, until the wine began to flow ; then a decorous cheerfulness broke out, and everyone laughed at the slightest sally. At last, amid applause, Mr. Adams rose.

“ Ladies and Gentlemen ! It is with the greatest pleasure I rise to propose a health. A health which I feel sure you will drink with the liveliest satisfaction and pleasure. The health, ladies and gentlemen, of a modest, obedient and beautiful young lady who is before us to-day. Modesty, my friends, is one of woman’s most precious attributes, and her brightest jewel. Obedience, as we know, is the first requisite of a good wife ; an argumentative, domineering female is against Nature. Beauty, gentlemen, ah ! beauty ! What words can describe its fatal effects on our susceptible hearts ? I could praise female beauty for ever ; but I must refrain in the interests of brevity. So I give you the

toast of one who combines modesty, obedience and beauty in the most sublime forms. In short, ladies and gentlemen, I give you the toast of the bride."

All rose and drank.

Mr. Tibbles replied.

" The emotions of a parent on occasions such as this are complex. He knows the little bird will spread her wings and quit the paternal nest, so that the blow is not unexpected ; yet when the moment comes, he cannot withstand the insidious tear. Mirth and the triumph of love demand rejoicing ; away vain regrets, and let us revel ! A father should be proud to see any daughter of his allied with such a house as that of the worthy Mr. Adams, a very merchant prince. His son, a mariner of intrepid bravery and sterling worth, is a son-in-law all might envy. This estimable young gentleman is possessed of every virtue proper to a husband ; of even temper, experienced to command, judicious and loving. Braving the fury of the elements in distant seas, or repulsing the deadly corsair with unexampled fortitude, has given him the heart and bearing of the noblest warrior, although his calling leads him in the paths of peace and prosperity. None but the brave deserve the fair ; and now the hero of a hundred gales weds my fair daughter. May he prosper ! Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the health of the bridegroom."

John was perturbed. He had no gift of oratory, and during Mr. Tibbles's discourse had been

vainly trying to compose a reply. When at last he had to speak he was in something of a panic.

“Er . . . ladies and gentlemen.”

“Hear, hear,” shouted his father, and raised a laugh.

“Er . . . ladies and gentlemen . . . it is an honour, a great honour to be able to reply to the last toast . . . er . . . my wife. . . .”

Old Adams cheered loudly.

“We thank you one and all for what you have said . . . and . . . we thank you for your good wishes on the . . . er . . . the happiest day of our lives. . . . We thank you.”

He sat down amid applause.

A wedding breakfast was not an occasion on which the gentlemen remained sober, so at the proper time Georgina left the room with the ladies and went to change into her travelling dress. Now that she was wedded all the seething doubts and fears were calmed, which had distracted her and made her scarcely responsible for her actions. Although quiet, the wedding had seemed perfectly dignified and in keeping with her rank.

John was given a room in which to change from full-dress to undress uniform with the help of one of the extra footmen. He was glad the whole of the ceremonial was over, and he would at least have the satisfaction of being alone for a few days with his wife.

A post-chaise came to the door, ladies and gentlemen flocked into the hall, and amid the usual cries and good wishes the couple set off.

Mr. Tibbles produced a fine handkerchief, and dabbed his eyes perfunctorily ; then returned to the dining-room with the gentlemen. The ladies followed Amelia upstairs, where they quizzed Mrs. Adams and considered the whole thing a very sad come-down for the Tibbles family.

John felt rather foolish when he found himself alone in the chaise with Georgina. He had not the slightest idea where he was going, so thought he might make his ignorance a conversational gambit.

“Where are we going, my dear ? ”

“To an inn in the country,” answered Georgina.

She was also nervous, and after remembering the speech in favour of obedience thought she might have her orders to the postilion countermanded then and there. But John did not care whether he went into the country or stayed in London.

“At all events we’re married,” remarked John.

“Yes, indeed, we are married,” agreed Georgina.

“We might as well get as much enjoyment as we can from the fact.”

“I am sure we shall be very happy,” said Georgina conventionally.

John gave a non-committal grunt.

“You were right to insist on an immediate ceremony,” conceded Georgina. “I admit I was wrong in asking for a postponement. Had

you agreed we should have been deprived of a honeymoon. But you must forgive me my maiden bashfulness. I was secretly frightened by the thought of becoming a wife."

"Why?" asked John, somewhat surprised.

"You must remember it is the instinct of woman to evade her pursuer. Much as she loves him, the nymph flies from the swain. Our poor hearts flutter so madly, that we lose all self-possession, and try to hide ourselves that we may recover our composure. You have been a very ardent lover; more ardent, perhaps, than was strictly proper; but I forgive you."

"Thank you."

"Gentlemen seldom do more than imprint chaste kisses on the hands of their betrothed. They seldom overwhelm the poor ladies with their embraces. However, the time for courtship is passed."

"I see; we can do what we like now without being ungenteel," said John.

In spite of Georgina's protest he spent the rest of the drive doing exactly as he liked, and enjoying himself enormously.

On the Saturday evening a post-chaise drew up at Mr. Tibbles's door, containing the returned honeymooners. The pair leapt out gaily and ran side by side up the steps into the hall, where Mr. Tibbles himself stood beaming a paternal welcome. The butler with a superior bow said that, though he feared it might be regarded as a liberty he could not restrain his pleasure at seeing his young mistress so happy. Amelia, who was

standing at the foot of the stairs, had no observations to make.

At the supper table Mr. Tibbles imparted all the latest news. The house was bought, servants engaged on the recommendation of Georgina's own maid, and the furniture had been delivered. If they did not like any particular piece they could change it and Mr. Adams senior would arrange for the crediting or debiting of the difference between that and something they liked better. On Monday they could take up residence.

"Then, my dearest Georgina, you will be mistress of your own establishment," smiled her father.

"Has father arranged about the cellar?" asked John.

"It is stocked," Mr. Tibbles assured him. "The port is some of the finest I have tasted, and will be in magnificent condition when you return from your voyage."

"I might bring back some Madeira," mused John.

"I am always willing to take a few dozen," said Mr. Tibbles. "Should you have any to spare, that is. No doubt when you become a Commander you will have to entertain."

"I shall start entertaining at once," decided Georgina.

"Yes, you'll be lonely soon," sighed her father. "Loving hearts will be sundered by stern duty. I advise you to surround yourself with friends and seek distraction in harmless

amusements. It is a comfort that you will have dear Amelia to bear you company."

Amelia coughed.

"I should not dream of disturbing poor Amelia," said Georgina. "I am sure she would rather keep her dear father company in his old age."

"I should," said Amelia. "I have no wish to meet tradesmen socially."

"And if you are here," added Georgina, "you will only mix with people of your own age."

The two sisters exchanged glances of mutual hatred.

"While you have been away dear Amelia has decided to devote herself to charitable work," announced Mr. Tibbles. "What is the work, my dear?"

"The Society for Instructing Felons in the Principles of the Established Church," snapped Amelia.

"Precisely, a noble object and one which will fully occupy your mind and enable the nobility of your character to be an example to the depraved and an influence for their improvement. I trust, however, that you will be cautious in your evangelism, and not expose yourself to danger of infection or contagion."

"I shall do the Lord's work as it pleases Him," replied Amelia.

"I am sure you will be happier among felons than in polite company," said Georgina.

Amelia rose majestically and left the room.

"I fear she feels slighted by your wedding," remarked Mr. Tibbles.

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The next morning John and Georgina breakfasted alone. Mr. Tibbles rose late on Sundays, and Amelia exceedingly early in order to have the maximum time for devotions. In the past the whole family had mustered in their best clothes and walked solemnly to church, followed by the footman with the prayer-books. But John had put on his ordinary clothes and showed no inclination to worship.

"You go with your father and Amelia," he said. "Religion is not much in my line. Also I want to visit a friend before I start work."

"John, you're not a freethinker?" cried Georgina in horror.

"I don't know what a freethinker is," he answered. "I shouldn't imagine I was."

"But surely your friend will go to church."

"Unfortunately they won't let my friend go outside."

"Is he ill?"

"I believe there are two doctors in attendance."

"Then, of course, it is only proper that you should visit him. Is it certain he will recover?"

"Death is not impossible," said John slowly. "Everything is being done to prevent it."

When Mr. Tibbles descended dressed for church he was surprised to find only Georgina and Amelia awaiting him. He was vexed.

"Where is John?"

"He has gone to sit by a sick friend," replied Georgina.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Mr. Tibbles. "Disgraceful. But since he is not here we must start without him."

He was out of humour all the way to the church, as he had wished to display his son-in-law to the public. The congregation seemed to be smirking and whispering to each other when he took his place in the family pew with only his daughters beside him. He was publicly humiliated.

John, meanwhile, sauntered down to Newgate and arrived in Mary's cell just as Doctor Hill was in the middle of an impassioned speech on the subject of love. He rose from his knees with dignity and eyed John with distaste.

"You might at least have the decency to knock when you enter a lady's apartment," he said sourly.

"What illness requires a doctor to kneel in front of his patient with an idiot grin on his face?" demanded John, ignoring the remark.

"John, he will keep plaguing me," complained Mary.

"I am but human," said the Doctor, defending himself. "When I have to remain in the company of the fairest nymph, the most delicate little charmer in the world, my heart rises in revolt and overthrows the government of my reason. I admit my action is base. I concede I am taking an unwarrantable advantage of a position of trust. I am willing to agree that Adams has found me employment and done much for me at other times. But I insist on the

fact that I am human. Without wishing to cause pain or anger in either of you I cannot refrain from pointing out that you are not man and wife and that in all good faith I have as much right to crave pity as Adams has."

"I'm damned if you have any rights at all," contradicted John.

"On the contrary, land is common until it is enclosed, and all sweet angels are but wild swans and fair game for Cupid's darts until they are enclosed with a golden ring."

"You'd better turn ballad-monger if you can use such figurative language," remarked John. "But argument or no argument, I shall be angry if you continue to plague my girl."

"And you're a doctor, sir," added Mary, "and ought to behave like a gentleman who's above trying to bed a poor girl who may be hanged."

"Aye, I'm a wicked old stallion with no morals or honour," confessed the Doctor. "And I know you like this dull-witted tarpaulin better than a man of parts and intelligence. What is more, I know I shall not preserve a whole skin if I persist, so I wish you both a very good day and may try to be more correctly professional in future."

He gave a low bow and left them.

"Perhaps he will be good now," said Mary.

"Only if he knows he'll get a broken head if he misbehaves," answered John. "However, I must go aboard to-morrow and must be home to dinner to-day, so let us make the best of our time. The Doctor is right, you are the most beautiful girl in the world, and the best."

CHAPTER XI

THE judge wanted his dinner, and so did the jury ; yet counsel for the defence persisted in his oratory. He ridiculed the whole case for the prosecution, pulled it to pieces and showed that it did not contain a single argument which would impose for one moment on such astute gentlemen as the jury. At last he reached his peroration, and with magnificent gestures seemed to hurl the whole edifice of the prosecution to the ground and stamp on the ruins. As his last words echoed through the court the old judge in his high seat sniffed at the bouquet before him, and slid a side-long glance at the jury-box. After fumbling for a few seconds with his notes he cleared his throat, and in a rather feeble voice started his summing up.

The prisoner Mary Cannel was charged with stealing a diamond pendant valued at eighteen hundred pounds five shillings and fourpence. She was employed as a servant in the house of a gentleman called Tibbles, and the jury had heard how at a dinner party a Mrs. Cole had missed the jewel from her head. So much was established beyond doubt. They had heard the witnesses for the prosecution prove that the lost jewel was discovered in the possession of the prisoner, and it depended on the circumstances of this possession

whether they found the prisoner guilty or not guilty. The judge coughed and rustled his papers before continuing.

The defence was that the prisoner in her capacity of domestic had very properly picked up the jewel when she found it lying on the ground, and was about to return it. If, however, the jury would recollect the evidence of the witness Paddock, a magistrate and a very respectable gentleman, they would remember he swore that the prisoner did not produce the jewel until she had been threatened with being searched. The judge thought there was no question that the prisoner had picked up the jewel, and no question that she had revealed it to the three witnesses for the prosecution. What the jury had to decide was whether the prisoner had actually picked up the jewel after it had been lost, or whether she had actually picked it out of the head of the witness Cole when attending that lady. The second question was, whether they considered there was any evidence to prove that the prisoner actually intended returning the jewel and whether she had taken reasonable steps to do so before she was threatened with being searched.

Having delivered himself of these observations as rapidly as possible, the judge sank into a coma while the jury filed out.

"I do not think this need detain us long, gentlemen," said the foreman, an honest butcher.

"I think there is considerable doubt," opined a juror. "I fail to see that the prosecution proved their case."

"They proved it up to the hilt," contradicted another. "I've never heard such a cock-and-bull story put up by a defence."

"Shall we put it to the vote and abide by the opinion of the majority?" asked the foreman.

"Give the girl the benefit of the doubt," urged a dashing juror in riding clothes who kept a livery stable. "The last prisoner was convicted, so it would be only justice to acquit this one. Besides, she's pretty."

"We cannot afford to encourage dishonesty in servants," grumbled a morose juror. "I say guilty. It would be an insult to a magistrate if we acquitted, and a direct incitement to our own domestics to pillage our guests."

"I move we vote," said another.

"Those in favour of guilty kindly raise their hands," said the foreman briskly. "Seven. I think, gentlemen, the guilties have it."

"Have it your own way," remarked the livery stable-keeper nonchalantly. "But you might have given her the benefit of the doubt."

"What doubt?" demanded the morose juror.

Doctor Hill was in court with the attorney Whilberry, and after the summing-up had pulled a long face. When the jury returned their verdict he sighed.

"I knew it."

"We must petition the Secretary of State at once," whispered the attorney as the judge assumed the black cap and gabbled sentence of death.

Immediately after the half-fainting prisoner had been removed the court adjourned for dinner.

The Doctor walked to the nearest coffee house and after eating a hearty meal went down to the river, where he took a boat to Blackwall.

The Brunswick Dock was filled with East Indiamen being dismantled or fitting out. At one end the mast house, a tall tower with a derrick overhanging the dock, was in constant use lifting lower masts in and out of the ships. In the long sheds behind the mast house riggers, sailmakers and sparmakers plied their trades. On the slips nearby East Indiamen were being built for the Maritime Interest to charter to the Company. The Dock itself was owned by a number of shareholders of the Company who graciously allowed its ships the use of it.

The *Clapham* lay there, with her bowsprit overhanging the quay. She was a fine ship with two complete tiers of guns, a double row of windows across her carved stern and a long poop rising above the quarter-deck. Painted a dull yellow with a black band above the line of her copper, she had dark blue upperworks picked out with gold leaf and scarlet. Astride her cutwater and supported by the headrails was a classical figure carved in oak, and painted in more than natural colours. Except that the figure was male and wore a toga it was difficult to decide whether it represented a Roman Deity, Socrates, or Mr. William Pitt. The Commander held that it was a personification of the civic dignity of Clapham.

Inside, outside and above the ship men were

working as hard as they could to prepare her for sea. On cradles slung over the side caulkers tapped away with great balls of oakum under their arms. On deck there was a confusion of riggers, carpenters, seamen and blacksmiths. In spite of the curses and complaints of the officers the decks were spotted with tar, dirtied by muddy boots, and thick with sawdust and shavings ; shouts and the noise of hammering, sawing and scraping filled the air.

The topgallant masts were fidded, and under the supervision of the chief mate the yards were being swayed aloft and crossed. Gangs of seamen and riggers under the eye of the Second Mate were clothing the yards ready to go in their places, setting up rigging, serving, splicing and tarring ropes. There seemed to be enough rope to hang the entire nation, as coil after coil was unrolled, cut into lengths and festooned over everything. Up aloft workmen climbed about the rigging or remained stationary, like flies captured in some colossal cobweb, exchanging stentorian bellowings with those who scuttled like ants below.

Slowly the main topsail yard rose on end, was hoisted in position, and canted until it lay horizontal, then it was secured to its mast, and the seamen under the charge of a boatswain's mate swarmed along it to finish its rigging. John watched the operation carefully, and when it was performed to his satisfaction went forward to stimulate work on the foremast.

"Look alive there," he shouted above the din.

"Yards must be crossed before to-morrow even if you work all night."

"We can't do no more than we're doing now, sir," grumbled the bosun.

"Yes you can. They've got the topsail yard across on the main," snapped John.

"Ah! but they've got no bowsprit, sir. The gang on the bowsprit stop us."

"You can please yourself whether you work properly now or go on with the job after the others have piped down," said John, and walked away to see how the mizzen mast was progressing.

When the Doctor reached the Dock the workmen were already beginning to leave. Aboard the *Clapham* the carpenters had put away their tools and only sailors and riggers still toiled on. The Doctor walked up the gang plank on to the foc's'le, where he found John with his head thrown back roaring at the men aloft.

"When you have finished emulating a dog barking up a tree I should like a few words with you," said the Doctor.

"Later, later," answered John testily. "We must get this finished."

The Doctor shrugged his shoulders and strolled along the littered deck aft. He was accosted by an officer in a very dirty uniform, with tar stains on his face, who demanded his business.

"Sir, I am the surgeon of this ship. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Hill, Miltiades Hill."

"Mine's Dickson, Third Mate," replied the officer. "So you're taking young Pilkington's

place. Well, sir, you couldn't know less than he did."

" I am flattered by your fulsome compliments, sir."

" You'll find this a smart ship," continued the Third Mate, wiping his face with a rag. " A very smart ship, and the new Chief Officer is a taut hand, I can tell you. He makes those damned riggers jump."

" When shall we be sailing, do you think ? "

" As soon as we can. We shall warp out to the stream to-morrow and take in our cargo and guns, then we shall go alongside the hulks for powder and ammunition. We ought to be in the Downs in three weeks, I suppose."

John came hurrying towards them with a worried look.

" What is it, Doctor ? "

Hill drew him aside and whispered " Guilty."

John nodded.

" My father is right, as usual. He said there was no hope. I wish I could find time to go and see her, but there's such a devil of a lot to be done. I suppose she will get her reprieve all right."

" Yes, I think that is fairly certain. The prison doctor is of my opinion."

" Then I shall be able to see her again soon," said John with relief.

" I'm not so sure about that," answered the Doctor.

" Why not, if she's let off hanging ? "

" Because they will probably transport her."

John seemed completely taken aback.

"A reprieve is not a pardon," added the Doctor. "And it is merely another form of punishment. I am afraid you will not see her again. They will burn her in the hand with the letter M and ship her off to Botany Bay."

"Burn her!" cried John in horror.

"Brand if you prefer it."

"But . . . Damme, is there nothing we can do?" asked John in desperation.

"For a suitable consideration no doubt we could prevail upon the gaoler to brand her with a cold iron," replied the Doctor.

"Give him whatever he asks," said John quickly. "Can we bribe him to let her escape?"

"No, escape is quite impossible, and she is less likely to die if transported than if cooped up in Newgate. The air is good and she will be mostly in the open in Australia," pointed out the Doctor, "whereas in Newgate the air is foul and gaol-fever very rife, also there is no chance of proper exercise out of doors."

"Are you sure we can do nothing to set her free?" asked John again.

"We can do nothing whatever, except make the branding a farce," replied the Doctor. "You may rely on me to do all that I can to ameliorate her lot."

As the Doctor went ashore he almost wept at the thought of Mary being huddled into a convict ship with the scum of the earth and sent to end her days in the most remote part of the world. John, meanwhile, had returned to his duty and

was getting the last of the yards crossed before dark.

That night John and three other Mates sat round a table on the disordered gun deck and drank rum and water by the light of a horn lantern. It was not worth going all the way back to Bloomsbury every night, so he had taken up his quarters permanently aboard and inhabited a small pen screened off by canvas bulkheads laced to battens on the beams and deck. The other officers occupied similar berths, but took their meals at a common table.

"Bob and I had some rare fun ashore this time," said the Second Mate. "I'm sorry we're going to sea so soon, although all my money is spent. But I suppose the girls wouldn't look at us without money in our pockets."

"True enough," agreed the Third. "I went ashore two nights ago to see that wench at the Shipwrights' Arms, and a box on the ears was all the satisfaction I got. A very different greeting from the one I got when we first came ashore. How did you fare?" he asked, turning to John.

"Oh! I had a miserable time, not a single spree," answered John. "And though I can't complain of being without girls, there was so much trouble and bother I'm heartily glad to be aboard again. Now we had better turn in, as we must be out by the morning tide."

Turn in they accordingly did, but had to turn out again at dawn to get the ship ready for warping out of the Dock to a buoy in the river. Hawsers and lines had to be got out and coiled

ready for running away, capstan bars had to be shipped and the lines to the quay cast off. The skeleton crew, aided by labourers from the Dock, hove on this, let go that, and coiled down another rope as the twelve-hundred-ton ship, a monster for her day, was carefully warped to the lock gates. John, in charge of the proceeding, had an anxious time watching the way the wind took her lofty spars and compensating for it by a pull on one rope or another, listening to the shouts of advice and reproof from the dockmaster, and seeing that the heterogeneous crowd on deck obeyed orders smartly.

At last the gates were opened and a rowing boat came under the East Indiaman's bow to take a small cable out and make it fast to the buoy lying in the stream ; then the capstan was manned by all hands and the ship moved into tidal waters. As soon as she was moored to the satisfaction of the Superintendent, one of the managing owner's clerks and the Chief Officer, barges and lighters started coming alongside with cargo, which was hoisted in by tackles from the lower yards and masts. Owing to the special exertions which had been made to get the rigging finished, the crew fondly hoped there would be little for them to do, since stevedores attended to the cargo. They were soon disillusioned, and were set to cleaning and painting under the relentless eyes of the officers.

As the day passed a waterman's skiff came alongside, containing Georgina and Mr. Tibbles. A midshipman, supposing they were probably

people of importance, promptly reported the matter to John.

"Invite them on board and bring them here," ordered John mechanically, and went on checking a list of stores with one of the owner's clerks.

Georgina looked at the swelling side of the ship and the battened steps nailed to her side, and then looked at the muddy river flowing swiftly past. Her heart failed her; she dared not climb up the precarious footholds.

"I will see your husband and tell him to make arrangements," said her father.

He went slowly and carefully up the side, gripping the manrope very firmly. On being led to John, he tapped that pre-occupied officer on the arm.

"Your wife is here and would like to be assisted aboard," he said sedately.

John gave a start when he saw his father-in-law.

"Georgina here? Why?"

"You have not been home for four days," answered Mr. Tibbles sternly. "Kindly instruct your men to assist her on board."

"This is a deuced awkward time to call," grumbled John. "But I'll have a chair rigged on a whip."

He shouted some orders, and a few moments later a wooden plank slung at each end was lowered into the waiting boat. With many protestations of nervousness, and assurances from the waterman that it was quite safe, she allowed herself to be seated on the plank, loosely lashed to

the sling, and hoisted aloft by sailors. When clear of the rail she was swung in and lowered carefully to the deck, where John awaited her with no signs of extreme joy in his countenance.

"You should have waited until the day's work was over," said John. "I am extremely busy now."

"But it is most important that I should see you," replied Georgina. "Amelia has been telling me terrible things."

"Never mind that sour old maid," snapped John. "I've got work to do. If you return at sunset I can spare any amount of time, but now . . ."

He swept his arm towards the hatches, where the cargo and stores were disappearing into the bowels of the ship amid shouts and the screeching of blocks. Clerks and junior officers were keeping tally and a number of sailors grunted and yelled as they hove up the burdens from the barges alongside.

"Yes, I can see you are busy, but I must talk to you now I am here. I cannot wait a moment longer," said Georgina.

"Very well," sighed John. "Come aft into the coach for a minute or two. I can't spare any more time."

He took her to the cabins under the poop where joiners and carpenters were fixing furniture in the passenger cabins. Since the passengers had to furnish their own cabins, and seldom made up their minds in a hurry as to which ship they would travel in, the work of making the berths

habitable was generally done at the last moment. John found a deserted and unfurnished cabin, and showed Georgina into it.

"Oh ! John, it is terrible," burst out Georgina. "Amelia has said you have deceived me."

She pulled out her handkerchief.

"She says you had a vulgar woman in Newgate you used to visit," she continued tearfully. "A woman who is going to be hanged for murdering her baby told her when she was distributing tracts in the condemned hold, and the woman said you had murdered her lover."

"Anything else ?" asked John coolly. "Piracy, treason, rape or poison ?"

"There, I knew it was a lie," exclaimed Georgina. "I told her that a woman who had murdered her baby would do anything. Why, the wretch could not even tell Amelia the name of the woman you were supposed to visit !"

"Honestly, I do not think this was a sufficient excuse for your interrupting my work," said John briskly. "Amelia can repeat all the gossip she likes without keeping me awake at night. If she prefers the condemned hold to a drawing-room she may remain there for all I care. But now I must get on with my work. Be a good wife, and if I get the time I will come home on Saturday. But duty first and family afterwards."

CHAPTER XII

THE *Thankful*, convict ship, beat through the Gull Stream with a fair tide, and came to an anchor in the Downs. It was late in the afternoon, and a dull day with a strong south-west wind knocking up a steep sea in the roadstead. A large fleet of vessels of every kind were waiting for a fair wind and some for a convoy. Sheltered by the county of Kent and the Goodwin Sands against the sea, they were protected from enemy privateers and ships of war by a two-decker and some frigates and sloops.

As soon as the *Thankful* was anchored and the hands went aloft to furl the sails the pilot squinted at the sky.

"Don't look good," he confided to the Captain. "The moon's wrong and the birds is wrong and the land looks wrong."

He swept a dewdrop from his nose with the back of his hand and sighed.

"Dirty weather for a guinea," he grunted. "See you've a clear hawse."

The Captain gazed at the trailing grey clouds and caught sight of a small expanse of watery blue.

"It'll shift to the nor'west and moderate," he opined.

"No it won't," contradicted the Pilot. "It'll

freshen at sunset with the turn of the tide and blow fresh or strong from the same quarter."

The Captain ignored him, and walking to the rail shouted to a passing boat. The boat, one of the fleet of Deal luggers, was hovering about in the hopes of finding work, and had been dodging round the *Thankful* since she came in. Taking a wide sweep the boat shot alongside, the fore lug came down with a run, and she stopped dead exactly abreast the main chains.

"There's your boat," said the Captain coldly to the Pilot. "I wish you a very good day."

"Pleasant voyage to you," replied the Pilot without rancour. "And I strongly advise you to get your t'gant yards on deck."

With a cheery wave of the hand he clambered over the bulwarks, and watching his opportunity, dropped into the waiting boat.

The Captain solemnly walked up and down the quarter-deck for a few minutes. As he paced to and fro he examined the ships around him. On his quarter was a ship which looked as though she were bound for Portugal ; abeam a North Country collier, obviously only a coaster, some distance astern a large East Indiaman painted dull yellow with a black band and blue upper-works. The Captain could not resist a feeling of envy at the sight of the Indiaman. Officers were well paid in those ships, and had a chance of making extra money by private trade, while he was unable to find anything better than an old hulk full of gallows meat which must be delivered at the ends of the earth after months at sea.

While he mused the Carpenter came aft.

"A foot of water in the hold, sir."

The Captain looked aloft, where the crew were finishing stowing sail.

"Send the sergeant here," he ordered.

Roused from a comfortable nap, the sergeant in charge of the military guard was not in a very good temper when he reached the deck.

"Sergeant," said the Captain, "I am afraid this is a leaky vessel, and we shall have to pump our way from here to Botany Bay. Now we have a lot of idle scoundrels locked up in the hold. Is there any objection to making them work the pumps? I will, of course, give the troops an extra rum ration for the extra guard they will have to stand."

"Make the swine work and welcome, sir," answered the sergeant.

"Thank you. If your men would kindly release half a dozen or so and chain them to the pumps they can begin at once."

While the *Thankful* was being pumped dry by her cargo the Commander of the *Clapham* was in consultation with his Chief Officer and the Channel Pilot. The East Indiaman had already been a week in the Downs taking aboard passengers and stores ready to sail with the first fair wind. Mounting forty twelve-pounder guns, she was more than a match for any privateer, and would proceed without convoy.

"It's not a mite of use your trying to beat down to Dungeness Roads, sir," said the Pilot. "There'll be a fret of wind before morning."

"What do you say, Mr. Adams?" asked the Commander, Captain Hayward, "I

"I think we'd better get the t'gant masts and yards on deck, sir, and be ready with the sheet anchor. I'm certain it is going to blow."

"Yes, yes, but from the nor'west," answered Captain Hayward. "It will help us down Ghannel. We can make the French coast or Alderney without running any risks."

The Pilot shook his head.

"Look at your glass, sir, it's dropping."

"Is it?" exclaimed Hayward, and ran to the mercury barometer which hung on gimbals by his berth. "Damme, so it is. I thought it had stopped this morning and would rise."

"The moon's all wrong," murmured the Pilot. "And I saw a cat running mad."

"May I strike the t'gant masts, sir?" asked John, quick to see his commander was wavering.

"Very well, Mr. Adams, and see the cables are in good order for veering," said Hayward, abandoning his whim. "We will wait another twelve hours and see what happens."

The Captain of the *Thankful* gave a sardonic laugh when he saw the East Indiaman start sending down her upper spars. The wind had lessened somewhat, and although great masses of dark cloud were piling up to the southward the Captain surmised they only held rain. A sharp shower would cause a shift or else knock down the sea and take all weight out of the wind.

"I suppose they think there's a typhoon coming," he said sarcastically to his Mate.

"They've got men enough to unrig the damned old wagon and rig her again in half an hour," grumbled the Mate. "I wish we had half her crowd here to handle this rotten old coffin."

"I see His Majesty's Navy are following the Indiaman," remarked the Captain. "They have probably both been listening to those fools of pilots."

The convicts having pumped the ship dry were being shepherded below by three soldiers with fixed bayonets. They went slowly since even labour at the pumps was preferable to being cooped up in a dark and dismal wooden cell and loaded with chains. In the after hold the women convicts were confined without any hope of coming on deck except at the prescribed times, when they were marched round and round for exercise under the eye of the sergeant.

Shortly before sunset a sloop of war with her fore topmast and main topgallant missing and her sails riddled with shot-holes, ran in to the roadstead, accompanied by a lugger in a very shattered condition. The man-of-war flew a British ensign and pennant while the lugger proclaimed the fact she was a prize by flying French republican colours under a red ensign. Having saluted the flagship, both vessels anchored.

The Captain of the *Thankful* was still on deck and remarked to the Mate that the Navy was utterly worthless.

"To think that a wretched little privateering lugger with a few damned republicans aboard

should be able to knock the spars out of a sixteen or eighteen-gun sloop and tear her canvas to ribbons," he exclaimed scornfully. "If I'd had the handling of the action I'd have run the lugger aboard and carried her by boarding before they had the chance to fire a gun. The Navy! Bah!"

He looked at the sky and sea, then turned towards the companion.

"There'll be a squall of rain in a minute, and the wind will fly to the nor'west. Call me as soon as it does," he ordered, and went below.

A few ragged wisps of clouds detached themselves from the blackness to the south and flew rapidly overhead. Over the land a dull red glow smouldered for a few moments until a grey pall of rain blotted out everything. Over the anchorage there was a momentary calm, then with a shriek a furious squall of wind and driving torrents fell upon the shipping, howling through rigging and making vessels strain at their cables. Darkness came quickly as the storm clouds drove over the sky and sheets of rain swept on with every squall.

As the gale increased the sea began breaking aboard some of the anchored ships. Captains who had not taken precautions began to fear for their safety, and set crews to work veering cable to the bitter end, and endeavouring to decrease windage by getting spars down on deck as fast as possible. Aboard the *Thankful* the Captain had turned in, and the Mate at first believed there was no cause for alarm. By the time he realised that a southerly gale was blowing it was too late

to do anything except pay out more cable. Turning out all hands he set one gang to work easing the hempen cable round the wooden windlass, while the others began getting another anchor ready for letting go. But soon the clumsy vessel was dipping her bows into the seas and taking water aboard green so that it was almost impossible to work on the forecastle. Although riding to a full scope she started snubbing with vicious jerks which made the whole ship tremble.

Roused by his Mate, the Captain took command once more. The fact that he had misjudged the weather did not improve his temper and after telling the Mate he was a fool he proceeded to tell the crew they were far more unpleasant things. It was imperative to get another anchor ready, yet the cable had not been bent to it ; for the crew, after one man had been washed the length of the deck and broken a leg, huddled aft and refused to go forward, where the seas were smashing aboard with monotonous regularity. In vain the Captain swore and argued that the ship might start dragging or part her cable any minute, most of the crew were landsmen and longshoremen, and were either too dull or too indifferent to be frightened by the danger. When the carpenter reported water in the hold his news alarmed the crew sufficiently for them to man the pumps without waiting for an order.

“ This old tub is too rotten to go to Australia,” shouted the Mate in the Captain’s ear. “ She’s complaining in every timber now, and the cable

won't hold for ever. Let's get out of her now."

"She'll ride it out," answered the Captain. "As for leaks, the convicts can keep them under. Fetch the sergeant and tell him to bring up a dozen, then turn the hands to getting that damned anchor ready."

The Mate left to carry out the order, and the carpenter came beside the Captain.

"She's creaking horrible forward somewhere," reported the carpenter. "Sounds as though something was breaking. I can't find out what it is. Too much water flying about."

"I'll drive the hands forward as soon as we get the convicts on the pump," answered the Captain.

The Mate shepherded four scared and bedraggled soldiers to the main hatch, and started to remove the tarpaulin which covered it, although he was at times nearly up to his knees in water. Before he could finish his task by getting off the iron gratings over the opening there was a loud splintering forward.

"What's that?" cried the Captain, as he peered into the darkness.

The ship suddenly rode buoyantly and seas no longer broke over her bow. All hands waited for a moment in suspense until there was a bellow from the carpenter.

"My God! She's carried away her windlass and the cable."

"Get that other cable bent," screeched the Captain, and made a run at the men clustered by the mainmast.

"Christ ! We're adrift !" exclaimed the Mate, and dashed forward.

All realised it was a race against time. The second anchor must be dropped before the ship drifted on to the Goodwin Sands. They had spent the morning unbending all except one cable, since the Captain did not think he would have to wait long in the Downs and would be able to lie at single anchor. As they worked feverishly bending the tough cable the men reminded each other of this, and cursed their commander for a lubber.

In the rain and darkness the cable was clinched round the anchor ring in an incredibly short time, and all was ready for letting go when there was another crash. They had drifted down on an anchored vessel.

"Let go ! Let go !" yelled the Captain.

"Hold hard !" roared the Mate. "There's nothing to make fast to."

Yells and curses from the ship they had fouled came faintly through the din of wind and sea. There was a grinding, rumbling creak as the two ships rubbed their sides together, then their lofty spars became entangled and in the indescribable confusion blocks, spars and rigging began falling on the heads of the two panic-stricken crews. In vain officers bawled and gesticulated ; all discipline was at an end aboard the *Thankful*. The anchor was let go by a demented sailor, and the cable was allowed to rush out like a huge snake without anyone trying to check it or stopper it to the foremast. In what seemed a moment

the end had whipped through to the hawse hole and followed the anchor to the bottom. The *Thankful* was now drifting swiftly and inexorably towards the Goodwins, locked to the ship she had fouled and set adrift also. A blinding flash of red fire and the roar of a cannon came from the ship alongside, followed by the fitful glare of a blue light which hissed and flicked in the wind and rain. The crew of the *Thankful* paid no heed to these distress signals, since the main yard had come crashing down and reduced all the boats on the booms to matchwood. A few moments later the rest of the yards fell and killed half a dozen men. The two ships drifted apart.

The East Indiaman *Clapham* was taking things easily. Her great freeboard prevented the hollow, breaking seas from invading her well-scrubbed decks, and two anchors secured by carefully-protected cables held her safely. When it became clear that the gale would be a strong one the topmasts had been housed and the windage of her spars thus reduced to a minimum. In spite of all the precautions taken, the watch on deck were standing by, and the officers were all ready for an emergency.

"Signals of distress to leeward, sir," a midshipman reported to John.

John, who was standing under the break of the poop, considered a minute.

"You had better inform the Captain," he said.
"I will get a boat ready."

Like most Indiamen the *Clapham* used her boats as farmyards. The long boat was full of

sheep, the barge of goats, and there were calves in the cutter. John had the cutter emptied of livestock, and ordered the animals to be confined between the guns in the waist. While one gang of men were doing this the rest of watch manned the yard and stay tackles ready to lift the boat and swing it overboard.

"The Commander's compliments, sir," said the Midshipman, returning, "but he is of the opinion that the Deal boatmen will attend to the matter."

"See the veal is properly restowed," John ordered the Third Mate, "and the boat secured."

No sooner had he started to walk aft than two more signals of distress were reported.

"Enter it in the log," said John. "I will see the Commander myself."

Captain Hayward was lying on his bunk fully dressed and reading a newspaper.

"What is it, Mr. Adams?"

"Two more signals of distress, sir," answered John. "I thought I had better let you know."

"Quite right," said Hayward. "But we cannot help them very much."

"I'll call for volunteers if you wish, sir."

"That would only mean losing a boat and a dozen good men," replied Hayward quietly. "I would expect help myself if I went on the Goodwines, and I should get it, but not from anchored ships. You know very well it would be madness for a ship's boat to dodge about in the broken water on the weather side of the sands. It could do no good and only end by capsizing. The Deal

men are quite able to rescue the crews of a dozen wrecks. They must be raking in money at the moment carrying off anchors and cables."

"Very good, sir. But I thought I ought to let you know," said John.

"Of course," murmured Hayward, and turned to his newspaper.

Captain Hayward was entirely right. In the darkness the Deal luggers under a scrap of reefed sail had been flying to and fro through the breaking seas. Ships which were dragging needed more cable ; those which had lost one anchor and were hanging on precariously by the other, needed another laid out for them. On the steep beach a row of boats were drawn up. At the first distress signal the triggers which held them were let go and they slid like a flash into the surf. With one man at the tiller, another at the sheet, and the rest bailing for dear life or acting as ballast, the boats raced for the wreck. They were willing to take any risk to save the lives of the crews, but they were not inspired wholly by humanitarian motives. There were rich pickings to be had if they could get aboard.

The *Thankful* went aground broadside on with both after and main hatches open. Seeing there was no hope of saving the ship the Mate had opened the after hatch and had gone down without orders to release the female convicts. He realised the chances of anyone at all being saved were slender, but he thought the women ought to have a chance. He had no quarrel with women, however bad, and he did not consort with any

other kind, so in the confusion he took the keys and started on his errand of mercy.

The stench below was almost unbearable, being a mixture of bilge water and seasick humanity. Most of the women were screaming or groaning, the timbers were complaining and creaking as though the ship would break up, and the masts magnified the booming of the wind. When the ship struck there was a terrific jolt and a series of sickening bumps, and the seas started smashing against the immovable hull.

"Hell!" cried the Mate. "I'm off out of this."

He dashed to the ladder and disappeared just before a mighty sea broke on board and sent tons of water roaring down the open hatch. Screams of despair from the chained convicts were scarcely audible above the din of splintering woodwork and the crashing seas. On deck it was impossible to stand, for the ship had taken a strong list and the seas broke clean over her. The survivors of the crew had taken to the rigging, while most of the soldiers had been washed overboard by the first sea. The Mate had gone with them, being caught just as he emerged from the hatch, and after being stunned by impact with the rail, had drowned alongside. The few women convicts who managed to gain the deck huddled under the bulwarks until one by one they were torn from their handhold by the invading seas. Rapidly the hull filled with water and began to break up.

Four luggers rounded up under the lee of a wreck. They had no difficulty in finding her

owing to a light being placed in the main top. The first of the boats hooked the lee rigging, and a couple of men sprang aboard the stricken ship. Scarcely were they on the wave-swept deck when an avalanche of sailors slid down the rigging from the main mast and tried to jump into the boat.

"Steady, there, steady," cried the coxswain of the boat. "You ain't all drownded yet. If the ship holds together you're safe enough and we'll save her."

The two boatmen dashed on to the poop, where they found the captain and officers, together with a few passengers.

"Will she hold together?" demanded the boatmen in unison.

"I think so," shouted the Captain against the roar of wind and sea.

"Then we'd better lay out an anchor," opined one of the boatmen.

"I haven't got any," roared the Captain. "A damned fool fell foul of me, set me adrift and tore the spare anchor from the chains."

"We'll go and get one," said a boatman.

At that moment the mainmast went by the board, and breaking under the deck tore a great hole as it fell. The lugger alongside was sunk instantly. As though nothing had happened another boat hooked on to the wreck and sent a man aboard while the men in the water were searched for by other boats.

"You'd better abandon ship," the new arrival shouted. "She's going to fill."

He went to the lee side and gesticulated to his boat. The passengers needed no second bidding, but crowded to the rail beside him.

"Where's the other boats?" asked the boatman.

"They've found another wreck," was the reply.

The ship had been slowly settling into the sand and was filling fast through the hole in her deck. A sea swept the poop and washed some of the passengers overboard. The men in the boat shouted to their mate to jump for it. Without hesitation he did so, and was picked up just before a clean sweep was made of the poop by another breaker.

"Where's the other wreck?" asked the man, as soon as he had recovered breath enough to speak.

"Nearly bow and stern with this," was the reply. "But she ain't easy to see, being well-nigh under water and a total loss if ever there was one. All her masts gone and only a bit of the stern showing."

In the broken water the boatmen busied themselves with picking up all the floating objects they could find when the safety of their own boats allowed them a respite from constant bailing. One boat swooped down on something dark in the shining white foam, and pulled aboard a woman tightly clutching a piece of wood.

"Is she alive?" asked the coxswain.

"Hard to say," answered one of the crew. "If we was to roll her on casks or squirt tobacco

juice into her eye I dare say she'd come to life."

A boatman with a quid in his cheek applied the latter remedy and swore there were signs of life. The form was wrapped up in a spare sail and stowed with the head lower than the feet.

"It's a long beat back to the shore," remarked the coxswain. "And if we go the others will get all the pickings. At the same time we can't let a party die."

"There's ships enough with surgeons aboard," pointed out one of the crew. "I can see lights from a double tier of stern windows from here. Suppose we put her aboard that ship."

"Aye," shouted the rest of the crew.

Sheets were hauled in and the boat beat towards the double stern windows with their beckoning lights.

CHAPTER XIII

DOCTOR HILL yawned and looked at his watch. The sun should have risen, but in the little pen on the orlop deck where he tended his patient no ray of natural light ever penetrated. A horn lanthorn hung on a hook showed a massive beam overhead, and the wooden bulkheads which surrounded a cot and a few square feet of bare deck. A thick, frowsty smell pervaded the whole cubicle.

Sighing, the Doctor put his watch back in his fob and after a glance at the form covered in blankets on the cot went out. The crew were already at work so that the orlop and gun decks were almost deserted. As he came up the companion ladder the Doctor passed from gloom to moderate light and then into the brightness of a keen sunny morning.

All hands were working at re-rigging the ship. The previous night's gale had blown itself out and left a brisk breeze from the north-west. Already the topmasts had been re-hoisted and fiddled, and while one party of seamen were preparing to send up the topgallant masts, others were setting up the topmast rigging.

The Doctor took a few breaths of the morning air, and seeing that John was busy, strolled to the rail. Near the Goodwin Sands a fleet of boats

were hovering round a mast and some black objects which rose from the water. Although there were fewer ships at anchor than on the preceding evening, a procession of coasters and vessels which had been in difficulties were sailing back from the northward after slipping their cables in the height of the gale and running out into the North Sea. As soon as the hands were piped to breakfast Hill hurried to John.

"I have a patient," he said quietly, "who was put aboard last night."

"Oh! How does he do?" asked John carelessly, and making as if to go below.

"The patient is alive but exhausted," answered the Doctor drily.

"We'll have him put ashore later," said John, turning to go.

"Wait," cried the Doctor. "It's most important."

John was standing at the head of the companion, eager for his breakfast.

Hill came up and whispered.

"It's a woman, Mary."

"Good God!" exclaimed John. "Are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure," snapped the Doctor.

John rubbed his chin for a moment, thinking deeply.

"What if they come for her?" he mused aloud.

"I suppose we could hide her, but she must go ashore."

"Try to find out the circumstances," urged the Doctor. "Perhaps the boatmen will know

whether any person is missing from any convict ship."

"I'll try the pilot," promised John. "There was a ship wrecked last night. It must have been hers."

Without waiting for any further observations from the Doctor he hurried to his breakfast.

There was no need to ask the Pilot anything ; he was busy recounting all the latest news he had gleaned from the boatmen bringing fresh provisions. Yes, there had been a convict ship lost with all hands, you could see the corpses all chained up down below at low water. It looked like a direct interposition of Providence that the wretches should meet a well-deserved if untimely end. It was a pity, though, that they should have been instrumental in wrecking another ship, a smart vessel called the *Garland*, of London, for Lisbon. Some boatmen had got aboard, but only one had got off her again alive. He didn't know whether there were any survivors.

"Do they make a count of survivors ?" asked John between mouthfuls.

"No, Mr. Mate, I reckon the boatmen have done enough by saving a life without going to the trouble of comparing notes," answered the Pilot. "I remember in '78 when the *Lord North*, brig, drove ashore there were six hands saved by different boats, and every man jack of them was to be seen later in different taverns being stood drinks for being the sole survivor. You soon know when they get ashore how many are saved. One will get asking after his messmate, and

another want to know if there's any chance of his getting back aboard, as he left five guineas in his chest."

"I suppose the agents soon find out," hazarded John.

"Yes, they want to know if there's any claim against the ship, and so forth," agreed the Pilot.

"But they only tell sailors to go to the devil if the fellows ask for money, since all wages stop with a total loss. And then there are the underwriters, who want to be sure the loss is genuine, and so on."

"Do you ever get survivors just sneaking off without saying anything?"

"I dare say it has happened," answered the Pilot. "But it seems against human nature to get out of a danger and not to tell everyone about it."

John finished his breakfast and told the Second Mate to take charge of the deck for a few minutes as he had to see the Surgeon. He then hurried below to the stuffy darkness of the orlop deck. Hill met him at the door of the little cabin and said "Hush" in a professional way.

"We must get her put ashore as quietly as possible," whispered John.

"Can you wait until this evening?"

"I don't know. We may sail any time."

"She ought to be allowed to rest," murmured Hill.

"Let me see her," urged John.

Hill stood aside and he went into the little pen. Carefully drawing aside the corner of a blanket

he saw Mary's face pale against a dark pillow, then Hill tapped him gently on the arm and he softly restored the covering.

"I must get back to work," sighed John. "I'll let you know later what to do."

Anxious not to attract attention by remaining below too long, John paused on the gun deck and spoke to the few men working there. He felt he was establishing an alibi by first inspecting the cows in their pen under the hatch and then seeing that the pigs were properly secured between the guns until such a time as the cables were unbent and the manger was ready for their reception. After surprising the gunner at work and cursing the cook he felt that he had achieved his purpose, and went up to the quarter-deck.

The Second Mate had got the topgallant masts aloft and they were being rigged ready for the yards to be crossed. Captain Hayward was pacing the deck with measured tread and looking about him with an air of satisfaction. He was proud that his ship had ridden out a blow in safety, and was being re-rigged comparatively quickly. John stepped up to him and made a formal report that all was satisfactory on the gun deck. The Captain, inclined for conversation, detained him.

"Two wrecks last night, Mr. Adams," he remarked. "It's just as well we left the assistance to the Deal men. I hear even they lost a boat and all its crew in the broken water. However, you were perfectly right to consult me, perfectly right. By the way, talking to my

boatman just now, I heard your father-in-law, Mr. Tibbles, suffered loss. Apparently one of the ships, the *Thankful*, belonged to him."

"Indeed, sir? I thought he only dealt with the Company," replied John.

"Yes, but the ship's husbands charter tonnage to the government for convicts," explained Hayward. "Your father-in-law's name is given on a notice posted ashore. There is a small reward offered for each body recovered. All the felons are burnt in the hand and can be easily identified."

"Will they be able to account for all of them, sir?"

"They say the wreck is badly shattered and is already sinking in the quicksands, so I doubt whether they will be able to give decent burial to all. By the way, wasn't there a survivor put aboard us last night from one wreck?"

"Er, yes, sir," stammered John. "From a ship called the *Garland*, I believe. The boatmen were not explicit."

"You had better send him to me before he goes ashore," directed the Captain.

"If you will excuse me, sir, I understand the survivor is in a serious condition," blurted out John in confusion. "The Surgeon is in constant attendance."

"Damn these boatmen," exclaimed Hayward with an air of vexation. "We don't want strangers coming to die in this ship. Why they didn't take the fellow ashore passes my understanding. Boy!"

A midshipman ran up and touched his cap.

"Request the Surgeon to come here," ordered the Captain, then, turning to John, asked: "What course do you suggest?"

After a moment's hesitation John replied.

"I should wrap the patient up in plenty of blankets and get a boat to take the sufferer ashore and see about lodging at an inn. If you wish, sir, I will see that it is done properly."

"Oh! I can't spare a senior officer for that sort of work," protested the Captain. "But the idea is good. I will put it to the Surgeon."

As soon as Hill appeared he repeated the suggestion as though it were his own. The Doctor approved.

"I think the patient should be given a little more rest, then I will go ashore myself in the same boat and see that everything is done properly. Should there be an excess of phlegm I would be at hand to apply the proper remedies. If noon would suit you . . ."

"Very well," said the Captain, with the air of having disposed of a difficult problem.

Hill gave an inclination of the head as though to invite John to go below with him.

"I'll just go and take a look at the patient, sir," he said. "If I know how heavy a body we shall have to lift I can arrange for the right number of men for the work."

John touched his hat and hurried after Hill, who was waiting on the main deck.

"You must give me money," said the Doctor.

"Yes, yes, but will she be safe, do you think?" asked John.

"Of course. I will wake her in good time and tell her what to do. No doubt she will be able to find herself a situation."

"Tell me when you wake her. I'd like a word with her before we sail."

The Doctor grunted.

"Very well, then. I suppose she might be glad to see you"

"She will be," said John.

They parted, one going up and one down the ladders.

The *Clapham* having been made once again ready for sea the Captain wondered whether it was worth sailing with a north-west wind or else whether he should wait until he could lay a course clear down the Channel. Having once hesitated and being saved he was in no hurry to get under way. The Pilot shook his head mournfully, and said that the colour of the water and the behaviour of the birds betokened another spell of westerly weather. It would be just as well to wait another week or two. It would be no good making a long leg and a short one as far as Beachy and then have to run back before another westerly blow. Beating down Channel meant a risk of falling in with an enemy, while a fair wind meant you were clear out into the Atlantic in three days. Also a north-west wind would tend to make enemy vessels keep to the English side.

The Captain listened to these arguments and decided to wait. The passengers were all on board, so they could sail at a moment's notice. He had scarcely made this resolution and retired

to his cabin before a boat rowed with man-of-war stroke came through the anchorage and drew close to the *Clapham*. She was not unobserved, and the moment it became clear that the East Indiaman was her objective every man on deck stopped working and rushed below, while the officers stood glumly on the quarter-deck without exchanging a word. They came alongside and a naval lieutenant in a threadbare uniform clambered up the ladder, followed by half a dozen stout seamen with cudgels.

John saluted the newcomer without enthusiasm and sniffed.

"Where's the Master of this vessel?" demanded the Lieutenant in a dry, official voice.

"Below, sir."

"Send for him."

John gave an order to a midshipman and remained at his post while the Lieutenant wandered round the deck, followed by his men, examining the rigging with a professional eye and scrutinising everything as though he were thinking of purchasing the ship. When Captain Hayward appeared he sauntered aft and gave a formal sort of nod.

"Kindly muster your hands, sir," he said.

"Indeed, sir, and why?" demanded Hayward.

"Because, sir, His Majesty's sloop *Skyrocket* has been in action and requires additional hands."

"That is as may be, sir, but I have a protection from the Admiralty against impressment if you would care to see it," snapped Hayward, holding out a piece of parchment.

" You are at liberty to make complaint to the proper quarter, sir," replied the Lieutenant without bothering to look at the document. " Now I fear I must insist on your mustering your crew."

Hayward muttered to John, who snarled at the Second Mate, who in his turn yelled for the boatswain. There was no reply ; except for officers and midshipmen the quarter-deck, waist and forecastle were silent and deserted.

" Go and find the bosun," John instructed a midshipman.

" Has it occurred to you, sir," Hayward asked the Lieutenant, " that this ship is bound for China direct, and any weakening of the crew is bound to endanger her."

" You may set your mind at rest, sir. We will give you a few substitutes," replied the Lieutenant. " No doubt a vessel in which discipline is as lax and the crew as idle as yours requires a great number of hands."

Hayward turned a dusky purple but could not trust himself to speak. The Midshipman came up the companionway shepherding the bosun, cook, gunner, and a score or so of the most useless hands in the ship. Once in the open air the bosun blew his whistle with great force and gave the order " Clear lower deck." Whereupon the poultreer, butcher, armourer, cuddy servants, two Chinamen, a negro and a handful of green hands came dashing up the hatchway as hard as they could, and doing their best to look like a hundred prime seamen. They crowded

round the mainmast, jumped up on the boom boats, jumped down again, struggled and pushed.

" You are indeed shorthanded, sir," sneered the Lieutenant, surveying the motley throng. Turning to his men he said, " Make a search below."

The man-of-war's men entered into the hunt with gusto and descended to the orlop deck and hold in search of their prey. Within a few minutes they were prodding about in the darkness, upsetting casks, opening chests and hullooing whenever they dislodged a sailor. Some of the captives put up a fight, and there were oaths and curses in the darkness, especially when two naval ratings mistook each other for merchantmen and tried to enforce mutual impressment. At last the breathless press gang with bruises and black eyes distributed among them, came back to the upper deck dragging six dishevelled and still struggling sailors.

" Is that the best you can find ? " asked the Lieutenant.

" Yessir."

Noticing the battle-worn appearance of his myrmidons the officer made no further comment, but ordered the impressed men to be put in the boat. Then, when his gang once more clambered aboard the *Clapham*, told them to seize half a dozen of the strongest men on deck. Before they had a chance to scatter the crowd round the mainmast were sorted by the press gang and a selection made.

" I wish you a very good day, sir," said the Lieutenant with a bow to Hayward. " I am

surprised you offered obstacles to the impressment of such very indifferent seamen. The necessary substitutes will be provided at once."

Hayward bowed coldly and did not perform the courtesy of conducting the officer to the gangway.

"There go two good topmen and some steady hands," remarked John ruefully. "I suppose we shall get a gang of swabbers, waisters and landsmen."

"Damn the infernal scoundrel," muttered Hayward. "I'll write to the Court of Directors at once complaining."

"Let's hope there are no more actions while we're at anchor here, sir, or the Navy will take every man we have," said John.

"Will they, by God!" exclaimed Hayward. "Mr. Adams, we sail the moment the tide turns. Kindly call all hands, unmoor and ride to a single anchor."

John was taken aback.

"But, sir, the survivor!"

"Have him put ashore at once," snapped the Captain. "Now man your capstan and rig the fish davit."

"Very good, sir," sighed John, and ordered the bosun to pipe all hands.

An East Indiaman, like a man-of-war, weighed anchor with a capstan and messenger. The spindle of the capstan passed through the quarter-deck and formed the centre of another capstan on the main deck, so that two complete gangs, one above the other, could both lend their strength

to the same rope. Hardly had the notes of the bosun's whistle died away than the hidden seamen came pouring from their hiding-places below and ran to their posts. The messenger, an endless rope, was passed round the main deck capstan and seized to the lee cable, while the weather cable was paid out round the massive oak riding bits. With a stamping of feet and a clacking of pawls the capstan began to rotate as a hundred men breasted the bars.

Doctor Hill was surprised when a midshipman came to him with orders to take the survivor ashore at once, as the ship was about to sail. However, knowing the matter was beyond his power of intervention, he hastily snatched up his hat and cloak and went to the little cabin where Mary lay. He woke her softly. Mary turned, and after blinking at the lantern for a moment looked wondering about her.

"You are quite safe," said the Doctor gently.

Mary gave an exclamation of surprise when she recognised him, and began asking questions about where she was and how she got there.

"Never mind that now," interrupted the Doctor. "I must get you ashore at once. I am going to wrap you in these blankets, and some men will carry you to a boat. Don't say a word or move. As soon as we reach the land, a place called Deal, I shall put you in an inn. Now remember you are the servant of a Mr. Smith, who is a passenger in this ship, and you are too ill to stand the voyage to China. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Your name is Sarah Jones. Can you remember that?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I shall leave some money with you and you must find yourself a situation in Deal. This ship is called the *Clapham* and will be back here in about a year and a half. When she returns I shall come and see you, so you must leave word at the inn where I can find you. Otherwise you must never write or send word to any friend or relation you have in the world. Do you promise me that?"

"Yes."

"One other thing," continued the Doctor. "You must never go near London. Now I am going to call the men to carry you to the boat, so wrap yourself up, face and all, and lie like a corpse when they come."

Mary, completely puzzled, did as she was told.

The *Clapham*'s great anchor, festooned with seaweed, was hoisted slowly to the cathead and secured. In the bowels of the ship the wet hempen cable was being flaked down by the light of a lantern. John on the quarter-deck bit his lip with vexation when four seamen came up the hatchway carrying a figure wrapped in blankets under the supervision of the Doctor. But he could do nothing that would give him the chance of a few parting words to Mary.

"Let me have money, for God's sake," whispered Hill, coming up to him. "I must make her comfortable."

John silently handed over his purse, and would have spoken had not a midshipman arrived with orders from the Captain to cast off the yard arm gaskets.

While issuing his orders he followed the blanketed form with his eyes until it disappeared over the side into a waiting boat.

After the bustle of cutting and fishing one anchor and getting all ready for making sail there was a long pause. It was desirable to get the full advantage of the tide down Channel, and the hour was not yet favourable. The Pilot, distressed at the thought of sailing, shook his head gravely as much as to say the hour never would be favourable and the ship might just as well remain in the Downs till she rotted. A voyage was not a thing to be entered into lightly.

While waiting the man-of-war's boat came back and deposited aboard the *Clapham* six miserable wretches and their scanty belongings.

"The substitutes," remarked the Second Mate. "What's too bad for the Navy is too bad to live in my opinion."

"Inform the Captain," said John.

A few moments later Hayward himself came on the quarter-deck, and after one look at the outcasts gave the order to weigh anchor.

"The Surgeon has not yet returned, sir," said John. "Shall we back and fill until he does?"

"Damn the fellow!" exclaimed Hayward. "Weigh the moment his boat comes alongside. Now heave short and loose sail."

Doctor Hill was in two minds whether to

remain ashore or go to sea, but the sight of the *Clapham*'s topsails dropping from the yards decided him. He must work and make money. With a sad heart he got into the boat, and groaned when the sail was hoisted and she began speeding out towards the Indiaman. He turned to look at Deal, then resolutely fixed his eye on the *Clapham*.

"At all events I shall be able to give her money of my own when I come back," he reminded himself.

A gun was fired when the anchor was weighed, and with her sails bellying out in the smart breeze the East Indiaman *Clapham* slowly started to forge ahead. Topgallant sails were loosed and sheeted home, then as the yards rose the ship felt the pull and began slipping faster through the green water. Soon only her gay stern and the red and white striped ensign of the Company could be seen by the anchored ships below her pyramid of canvas. She rounded the South Foreland and was out of sight.

CHAPTER XIV

THE world aboard the *Clapham* was ordered according to strict routine and custom. There were few passengers, and all were men, writers and officials bound for the Company's factory at Canton, thus saving officers and crew from the danger of friction, which was always present when there were soldiers aboard. So all settled down to the six or seven months' voyage with a comfortable feeling that all would go well.

After leaving the Downs there was enough north in the wind to enable the ship to clear the Channel without making a tack, and having deposited the Pilot in a passing fishing boat, a course was laid for Madeira. The hands were kept busy at exercising the great guns, drilling with musket and pike, as well as having the ordinary work about the ship to do.

When at last the ship was out of soundings, John had some leisure in which to listen to the conversation of the passengers. These gentlemen, being faced with the prospect of abundant food and complete idleness for two hundred days, found time hang rather heavy on their hands. The younger ones would have liked to clamber up the rigging and essay the acrobatic feats the topmen performed as a matter of course, but the thought of their social position restrained them.

Had the matter ever been brought to his notice there is no doubt that Lord Chesterfield would have condemned in no uncertain tones the idea of a gentleman emulating the ape. Accordingly the passengers quarrelled, played chess and other games, wasted the time of the officers, and indulged in literary composition.

One evening when John was sitting with the Surgeon and Third Mate over a glass of rum the party was joined by young Mr. Wooland, who was going to China to take up the position of writer or clerk. He was politely welcomed and offered some spirit, which he accepted with secret misgivings, not being used to strong waters.

"We were just discussing, sir," said Dickson, the Third Mate, "as to whether taken by and large and in a general way there isn't more to be said for drink than women. Now, sir, Mr. Adams here knows all about both, and so do I, while the Surgeon only gives his opinion in Latin and discusses the effects on a man's constitution. Which would you prefer, sir?"

"Oh, come," exclaimed Mr. Wooland, choking at the fiery nature of the rum. "The two are not to be compared."

"I don't know about that," said Dickson. "It's a question of what you spend your money on."

"Love is an ennobling passion, while swilling is entirely base," declared Mr. Wooland, and banged his fist on the table.

"So that settles your argument, Dickson," said John.

"I cannot wholly agree with the verdict," remarked the Doctor. "Venus causes more broken promises, more crimes and violence, and more lasting misery than Bacchus. Your Paris by the rape of Helen plunged Greek and Trojan into a deadly war. Had he stolen a butt of Madeira or a hogshead of port both sides would have joined in revelry. In the case of Cleopatra, her unbridled lust resulted in the enslavement of a venerable kingdom and the extinction of a mighty civilisation. No beaker of Falernian, nay, no river of Hippocrene, could ever have wrought such dreadful havoc."

"I concede that love often ends in the most sublime tragedies," began Mr. Wooland. "But . . ."

"Ninety-nine times out of a hundred it only ends in sordid squalor," interrupted Hill.

"Or an empty pocket and the need of a doctor," added Dickson.

"What the devil does the end matter?" demanded John. "We don't eat apples just for the fun of getting a core."

"A hit! A palpable hit!" cried the Doctor. "What do we care if the morning brings a headache, let the bowl pass."

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Wooland, "you are approaching the question in the wrong way. Regard it from a loftier aspect. Without boasting I think I may say that I am not entirely without poetic feeling. Also I have studied the greatest authors. Let us not, I beg, allow ourselves to become low or petty."

He swigged off the remains of his glass without coughing or even watering at the eyes.

"These poets are skilled in deception, I own," replied the Doctor. "They can make the dull, brutish existence of a foul shepherd seem attractive to a stupid woman who has never been three miles from town and is tired of her empty life of formal insipidity."

"The only poem I ever read was Falconer's 'Shipwreck,'" said Dickson. "But there's a lot of good sense in it even if names and things are a bit theatrical."

"Theatrical!" exclaimed Mr. Wooland. "Why, the drama holds the mirror to Nature. Consider Shakespeare."

"Why?" asked Dickson.

"Because he is a mighty poet and a demi-god," was the reply. "The drama is the pinnacle of man's achievement."

"I like a good play myself," admitted John. "Especially if there are some good jokes and a bit of fighting."

"Yes, and some pretty wenches and good broad puns," added Dickson. "I like a bit of sentiment as well and perhaps a dance or two."

"A play is nothing without wit," said the Doctor. "Give me Congreve."

"I don't know anything about him," said John. "But I saw a fine play where a man they all said was a bastard turned out to be the heir to a dukedom, and after killing a baronet in a duel married a squire's daughter. The fellow had a lot of dirty tricks played on him, and nearly got

hanged through being falsely accused of forging a will. They had real sheep on the stage in one scene."

"That's the sort of play we ought to do this voyage," remarked Dickson.

Mr. Wooland pricked up his ears.

"Do you act plays aboard ship?" he asked eagerly.

"Various rude gestures are made for the purpose of diverting passengers and crew," said the Doctor.

"Magnificent!" cried Mr. Wooland. "I will provide you with a play, gentlemen. A tragedy of my own composition. Without wishing to boast, I believe I may say that it is not without certain merit. It will prove to you the importance of Love, for the hero after an inward struggle decides in favour of Duty, but is thwarted and dies, having seen all his work undone."

John looked blankly at Dickson, while the Doctor coughed.

"It is an historical piece," continued Mr. Wooland. "And though set in a past age, faithfully mirrors the problems of the present day."

"A tragedy, eh?" murmured John.

"Yes, terrific in its intensity and it cannot fail to interest and elevate. I will read it to you."

"I have to go on watch in a few minutes," said Dickson hastily.

"I must turn in," said John.

"No matter, gentlemen, I will bring it down to-morrow, when you may have two or three

hours to spare. It is called 'Bradshaw, or the English Brutus,' and deals with the time of the Great Rebellion. On seeing Doctor Hill the first time I thought what a magnificent Oliver Cromwell he would make."

"I am flattered, sir," said Hill coldly.

Thoroughly alarmed, the two officers rose together, and with the briefest of good nights fled to the quarter-deck. Sail had been shortened for the night and the hammocks piped down, so that there were only the watch about the deck. All the various skilled workmen known as idlers, such as the carpenter and sailmaker, were enjoying the exemption from watchkeeping their position gave them. As Chief Officer John had the same privileges as the First Lieutenant in a man-of-war and could sleep all night if he chose, though he was expected to turn out at once for any emergency.

After taking a few turns of the deck and glancing at the stars as though to make sure they were all in their proper places, John thought it might be safe to return below. He had scarcely begun to walk aft when he heard his name whispered from the deep shadow of the bulwark.

"What is it?" he asked sharply.

"Mr. Adams, sir, I'd like a word with you," said the voice softly.

"Who are you?" demanded John, stepping up to the shape he saw faintly. "What is your duty?"

"I'm to pull this rope, sir, if I'm told to," answered the man.

" Well ? "

" My name is Budge, sir," whispered the man.
" It's through you, sir, I ever went to sea."

" True enough, I remember you," said John.
" I take it you were formerly of His Majesty's
Sloop *Skyrocket*."

" Yes, sir."

" Well, I bear you no malice. Do your
work properly and all will be well, neglect it and
there will be trouble. At all events your wish
to go to Asia is being gratified and we'll make a
man of you or break you in the attempt."

" Yes, sir," answered Budge. " I was going
to ask you, sir, as a favour whether I couldn't be
given another post, sir. All these ropes, sir, mix
me up and I never was much of a one for climbing,
sir."

" You want to be a servant, eh ? "

" Yes, sir, that being my trade."

John considered a moment.

" If you can get one of the cuddy servants to
change places with you I will allow the transfer."

" Thank you, sir. I suppose you don't want
another servant yourself, sir."

" No, I already have one," said John. " And
I think you have already taken too much interest
in my private affairs to be eligible."

He walked off without another word. Generally as soon as he got to sea he forgot all about the shore and his relations. In fact he had by habit acquired two entirely separate lives which never encroached. But this time it seemed as though his land and sea existences were becoming

mixed. First the unconscious Mary was brought aboard and then Budge appeared. He had been too busy to see Mary, but he would have to suffer the sight of Budge for a year or more, a constant reminder of the times at Newgate and an unsettling element in his daily thoughts. Now he was at sea and had the practical running of the ship he did not wish to recall a moment of what had passed, and wished everything to be laid up in lavender for his return. But this time he would return to a wife, certainly not a state of affairs over which to chew the cud of reflection.

He went below cautiously, and, after reconnoitring, saw that Mr. Wooland had gone. Only Hill sat by the table with the rum. John came boldly to the table, and after helping himself sat down.

"A coxcomb!" ejaculated the Doctor.

"Are you talking to me?" demanded John, setting down his glass.

"Yes, I was describing that self-opinionated little scribbling whig," growled Hill. "He dared to accuse me of a false quantity."

"Have you been selling him drink?"

"Certainly not. I'm not a tapster," retorted the Doctor. "A sneaking little Jacobin, a crawling revolutionary without loyalty or patriotism, a mere snake. *Arma virumque cano* indeed!"

"He's only a passenger. What the devil does it matter what he says?" John pointed out.

"But it does matter," insisted the Doctor with a hiccup. "I'm not going to have a

hundred lines of Virgil flung at my head and then be accused of a false quantity when I retort with Horace."

"Find someone else to talk to if you want sympathy," said John. "I don't mind how much you abuse each other in Latin."

"You're a mere unlettered tarpaulin," grumbled the Doctor. "But how I envy you."

"Why?"

"Here you are on the way to make a fortune, while I, a man of twice your parts, spend everything as soon as I get ashore," complained Hill in a maudlin voice. "Though humane and genial by disposition I am unable to win the love of attractive women. She even repulsed me when I would have kissed her good-bye."

"Mary?" asked John quickly.

"Yes, I would almost go to the length of marrying that sweet nymph. After all I and I alone saved her life twice, yet she refused even a little kiss, even a little kiss," and the Doctor shed a tear.

"If she got my pay when I was ashore she would keep me from sinful extravagance, and being but humbly bred would not be above doing the housework herself. Yes, I will marry her."

"That depends on her, I think," said John coldly.

The Doctor was about to speak when he checked himself and a slow smile spread over his face. He removed his wig, and covering his bald pate with a huge red silk handkerchief lolled back in his seat grinning.

" Anyhow, it doesn't matter," remarked John. " We're at sea now. I don't want to argue about what is over and done with."

" Over and done with," repeated the Doctor. " So you are done with her, are you, my fine fellow ? "

" Until I meet her again," replied John. " If you had any responsibility or real work to do in this ship you wouldn't rake up the past."

" The past doesn't die so easily as you seem to think," muttered the Doctor.

" That's true," sighed John.

He rose to his feet and stretched himself.

" I'm going to turn in," he announced, and went to his little canvas-walled cabin.

Although he could usually drop off to sleep almost as soon as he was in his cot, this night John stayed awake for what seemed hours thinking. He did all he could to make his mind a blank, but his mental efforts were useless ; he could not help thinking of Mary in Newgate and of his wife. When at last he did fall asleep he dreamt that his wife was hanging Mary from the foreyard and he was powerless to stop her since Doctor Hill tripped him up every time he tried to walk.

He turned out before dawn, and after exchanging a few commonplaces with the officer of the watch tramped the deck gloomily. With daylight the work of the ship commenced, and fully occupied his mind. Decks had to be scrubbed, sail set, and a fresh nip taken in all running rigging. The watch which was sleeping below was

turned out and the men came trooping up on deck, each bearing his hammock neatly lashed up with the bedding inside, and stowed it in the nettings which crowned the bulwarks.

While John was supervising all that went on the passengers came on to the quarter-deck and started marching round and round to give themselves an appetite for breakfast. Mr. Wooland did little walking, and at the earliest opportunity buttonholed John.

"With reference to my play, Mr. Adams, I have decided you are well suited to the part of Fairfax. I think King Charles might be played by Mr. Dickson. In order to make the tragedy convincing and intense I have decided to play Bradshaw myself. It is a difficult part to master, and I am afraid I cannot trust it in other hands. I hope you are not offended."

"Not at all sir," answered John. "But until proper arrangements are made I cannot promise that the piece will be performed."

"Oh, I will attend to that," Mr. Wooland assured him. "I am related to Captain Hayward and know I can get his consent. I have discreetly sounded him already."

"If you are sure it will be acted, sir, I am afraid I must ask to be excused, since I have no skill as a player and can never learn things by rote. It would be a pity if the thing was spoilt just because you wished to give the Chief Officer the best part. I shall not be in the least offended, and quite understand if you allow a junior to take my place."

"That is very generous of you, Mr. Adams," said Wooland. "I quite appreciate your position. However, depend upon it I shall not pass you over altogether ; there are some small but dignified speeches. Pym, Barebones and others appear, but have little to say. I included them to add majesty and accuracy to the performance."

"I dare say I might find time for something like that, sir," said John, who thought it might be churlish to consign the whole business to the devil.

"I am in some doubt as to whom to choose for the female parts," complained Mr. Wooland.

"Oh, run your eye over the midshipmen or boys," answered John. "They always . . ."

"Sail oh ! " shouted the look-out.

"Where away ? " bawled John, nearly deafening his companion.

He forgot all about everything except the ship.

"Dead astern, sir," reported the look-out.

John raced up the poop ladder, shouting to a midshipman to inform the Captain as he did so, and on gaining the taffrail levelled his telescope at a white speck on the horizon. In a few moments Captain Hayward was beside him, unshaven and panting.

"What is she, Adams ? "

"I can't quite make out, sir, since she's end on. If we alter course we can soon find out her intentions."

Although no orders had been given to clear for action or discontinue work, the hands were in a

state of ill-concealed excitement. A strange sail was as like as not an enemy, and that would mean fighting. In calm tones the order was given to man the braces and shift the helm. As the ship came up into the wind and heeled over to its strength, a careful watch was kept on the stranger.

"She's hauled her wind too, sir," reported the look-out.

"Then we are being chased," declared the Captain.

CHAPTER XV

THE chase proved a fiasco, for as soon as the pursuer was close enough to count the number of the *Clapham*'s guns, she put up her helm and made all possible sail to leeward, without even waiting to display her colours. Tension relaxed aboard the Indiaman, and she pursued her stately way towards the equator, shortening sail every evening and treating time as a trifling matter unworthy of attention. In the North-East Trades studding sail were set by day as a concession to the prolonged fair winds, and to some extent the vigilance of the officers abated as they knew sudden gales were improbable. In spite of all precautions the ship frequently sailed over a hundred miles a day.

The crew performed their functions with monotonous regularity, and the passengers having lost all sense of time, eagerly followed any pursuit which would relieve the intolerable tedium of existence. Mr. Wooland had assembled the enormous cast required for the performance of "Bradshaw, the English Brutus," and whenever possible had rehearsals. The Captain having given his permission, had perforce to wink at the dereliction from duty resulting. At all hours of the day the amateur playwright would request the officer of the watch to allow men to be excused

duty while they were coached in their parts. Although few could make head or tail of the blank verse they had to declaim, and thought the whole thing nonsense, it was better than work.

John found his hands pretty full, since he had the entire running of the ship under his care, and all the various petty officers had to be carefully supervised. The miles of hempen rigging alone were enough to keep a man busy. At times standing rigging would require setting up and the ship had to be hove to while this was performed. One rope would chafe another and have to be renewed, or else extra chafing gear fitted. Everything had to be kept spotlessly clean, but even so there was always a smell below of bilge water, rancid provisions and a hundred subtle ingredients. As in a man-of-war, seamen were flogged for the slightest misdemeanours, and it was John's duty to examine culprits and make his report to the Captain. Then gratings would be rigged, the offender seized up with rope yarns, and a sturdy boatswain's mate would wield the cat-o'-nine-tails on the offender's bare back. In the evenings John had to chat with the passengers or assist at rehearsals.

One evening he found Mr. Wooland busy with a rehearsal. Doctor Hill, who had been coerced by the Captain into acting Oliver Cromwell, was proving refractory, and the hero-producer was losing his temper.

"Have you no feeling for tragedy?" demanded Mr. Wooland shrilly. "Can you not see the anguish of the situation? Bradshaw

having condemned the tyrant Stuart to death finds that Cromwell, whom he trusted, is assuming despotic power. Let us begin again at my speech."

Hill sniffed and assumed the inflexible attitude proper to a Cromwell, while Mr. Wooland placed one hand in the opening of his waistcoat and flourished the other in the air.

" And was't for this imperic's Cromwell that
Thy marshalled armies spurred by patriot
zeal
Did suffer wounds and even noble death ?

Now, sir, kindly wince."

Cromwell duly winced and contorted his face into a horrid sneer for his reply.

" Bradshaw, in vain you ask me to relent,
And like the bootless Black on Afric's plain
Who raises hand on high in supplication
To cloudless skies that they may bring him
rain
You ask me to forgo the martial victor's
prize.
Go to, no rain of mercy falls from me.

I may add, sir, that the speech does not scan."

" For the hundredth time, sir, I repeat that any little unevenness in the verse will be smoothed out later," snapped Mr. Wooland.

" And for the thousandth time, sir, I see no reason why I should commit to memory jumbles of words which are subject to daily revision," retorted the Doctor.

"Very well, sir, if we must niggle we must. Then read the penultimate line, 'You ask me to forgo the victor's prize,'" said the author, and suppressing his anger continued :

"Fie, Cromwell, fie, to treat your Bradshaw thus."

Unmoved by this rebuke the Lord Protector outlined his policy.

"Beneath my sway this plot of English land
In solemn order and in godly sort
Will take its precept from the Decalogue.
No tumbling fools or motley players then
The Sabbath Day with mirth shall desecrate."

This cut Bradshaw to the heart.

"Hold, Cromwell, hold. Is't thus the Drama
seems
To Sidney Sussex's Fellow Commoner
Who read in fields beside the flowing Cam
The works of Terence and of Sophocles ?"

Having delivered himself of fifty lines in praise of the Drama and refuted all Puritan aspersions on it he paused for breath.

"I think that will do for the present," he said at last. "The piece is shaping well. Since I have promised to play chess with Mr. Fellows I must wish you gentlemen good night."

John and the Doctor bowed as he took his leave.

The Doctor sat down and removing his wig covered his head with his handkerchief.

"Adams, this play is past a joke. It ought to be stopped," he said gravely.

"It sounds damned dull," agreed John. "Is there any fighting at all?"

"That is not the point," replied Hill. "The matter is that the whole thing is a Jacobin tract in praise of popular assemblies and cutting off the heads of kings. Bradshaw was the president of the mock trial which sentenced Charles the First to death."

"Was he?" exclaimed John. "Then there's more in it than meets the eye."

"Red revolution is in it, mutiny is in it," declared Hill solemnly. "It is but a few months since the King of France was beheaded by the howling savages who have made this war. The sentiments in this play are pro-French and subversive of all discipline. It would be madness to present it before the crew, and so encourage them to democratic opinions, and justify murder before their eyes."

"If it's against discipline I'll see what I can do to have it stopped," said John. "The devil of it is there are foremast hands acting in it."

"I don't think there is any danger at present," opined Hill. "The hands have only had to learn a few unrelated scraps of blank verse which seldom scans. If they saw all the pieces fitted in their places there might be the danger of their understanding what it was all about."

"Have you a copy?" asked John.

The Doctor pulled a roll of manuscript out of his pocket and handed it to his companion.

"There seems to be a lot of it," said John, eyeing the sheets with suspicion.

"An ordinary five-act tragedy."

"If you think there's danger in it there's no need for me to read it all," decided John, cramming it into his pocket. "I'll take it to the Captain and ask him to form his opinion of it."

Without delay he went aft to the Captain's cabin and tapped on the door. On entering, he found Hayward writing up his journal at a desk.

"What is it, Mr. Adams?"

"It's about this play of Mr. Wooland's, sir," answered John. "There is more in it than appears on the surface. If you read it carefully you will see that it encourages mutiny and killing kings."

"What!" exclaimed the Captain in horror.

"It's supposed to be about the execution of Charles the First, sir, but, as you can easily see, there has been another king beheaded since then. The play is in favour of the execution."

"Good heavens! Young Wooland must be a Jacobin. It was clever of you to see through his plan."

"The Surgeon, sir, who has been given the part of Cromwell, pointed the double meaning out to me," confessed John. "Perhaps if you would read the play yourself you could understand the difficulty."

He pulled out the rolls of paper and offered them to Hayward, who looked at them in dismay and finally waved them aside.

"I am quite willing to take your word, Mr.

Adams. I have no time to read all that. Now that I come to think of it I have heard young Wooland give vent to some very revolutionary sentiments."

"Would you speak to him, sir?"

Captain Hayward considered a moment.

"Since he is a relation and has influence it will need tact and address," he said slowly. "I should be glad if you could help me in some way."

"I can be deemed to have complained that rehearsals interfere with the duties of the crew, sir."

"Excellent, Adams, you think of everything," said Hayward approvingly.

"I would suggest, sir, that he be asked to write a comedy requiring as few persons as possible. It will take him several weeks to do it, no doubt."

"The very thing!" exclaimed the Captain. "If he has a few good broad jokes which will amuse the crew it ought to go with a swing."

"There's one other thing, sir," added John. "A landsman called Budge asked to be transferred to the post of cuddy servant, but was unable to get anyone to exchange with him. He is no seaman and used to be drawer in a coffee house and would be more use below than on deck. Might I force an exchange with Simmonds?"

"How the devil did he come to be signed on if he was a mere landsman?" asked the Captain.

"He wasn't, sir, he was one of the substitutes provided by the *Skyscraper* sloop in the Downs."

"Then I can do nothing for him," said Hayward briskly. "Simmonds was shipped properly and is entitled to the emoluments of his post. I am surprised you should suggest such a thing."

"As a matter of fact, sir, I used to frequent the coffee house where he served," explained John. "And he is merely a nuisance on deck."

"So are all the other substitutes," replied the Captain. "However, if you wish to do something for him you can make him your own servant."

"Thank you, sir."

John left the Captain's cabin somewhat downcast. He felt vaguely that he had rather overdone his revenge on Budge by getting the fellow impressed. There was no question of the fact that a sea life did not suit everyone, and Budge seemed to find it absolute hell. The first time the fellow came up for punishment on the complaint of the Third Mate, John had solemnly warned him, but on the second occasion there was no alternative but to flog him. As soon as the shivering wretch removed his shirt his back was seen to be a mass of scarcely-healed stripes inflicted by the Navy. The mild dozen he received opened out old wounds and sent him moaning to the sick bay for several days. A few more floggings would break him completely, and yet he was too inefficient to escape further punishment. John realised there was no hope for the man unless he became his servant.

The next day Mr. Wooland became a positive curse. He drifted disconsolately about the ship

declaring that it was hopeless trying to improve the minds of those who set dull routine above Art. His fellow passengers having expelled him from their midst as an intolerable bore, he tried to get sympathy from the officers. Those who would even listen to him seemed appalled at the idea of anyone daring to question the Captain's ruling, and solemnly cautioned him to be careful what he said. It soon became obvious that sailors were impervious to reason and had a low opinion of tragedy. John brightly suggested a comedy performed solely by passengers, which would amuse and elevate the busy seamen, but this suggestion failed to please the disgruntled author.

"Comedy is beneath the notice of a poet," he declared. "It is merely flashy prose. There might be a case made for satire though. I will consider satire."

"I am sure the other passengers would like it," said John soothingly.

"Ha! Will they? I shall aim my shafts at them," replied Mr. Wooland. "Yes, I shall demolish dull formalism, petty authority and overweening arrogance."

John thought this sounded as though there would be more mutiny afoot, but consoled himself with the reflection that the piece was not even written yet.

"Crass stupidity ought to be pilloried as well," added Mr. Wooland. "Yes, satire is emphatically worthy of my talents."

"Then write a nice satire, sir," suggested John soothingly.

"I can assure you it will not be nice," said Mr. Wooland sombrely. "Petty tyranny will be flayed alive."

"The fellow must be an out-and-out Jacobin," thought John to himself at the conclusion of the interview. "If a gentleman can get these mutinous notions foremast hands must be infected twice as badly. We shall have to be careful and tighten up discipline."

A few hints to the other officers and the bosun resulted in all men who had once had parts in "Bradshaw, the English Brutus," being carefully watched for the slightest hint of insubordination. The victims of this scrutiny, feeling they were being singled out and victimised for some obscure reason, became sulky and resentful in manner and insolent in speech. Gradually the number of floggings grew and sentences became stiffer when the Captain realised that there were signs of disaffection among the seamen. He ordered the officers to be on their guard for the slightest sign of mutiny or traces of revolutionary tendencies. Except for the superior food and pay the hands complained to one another that the ship was becoming worse than a man-of-war, and speculated on the reason for it all.

Thomas Budge having been installed as John's servant was approached by some of the steadier hands in the hope that he might be able to discover the cause of the sudden change in the attitude of the officers. Since he messed and slung his hammock with the others Budge dared not refuse for fear of being shunned by all. He

therefore waited his chance and managed to find an excuse for entering John's cabin after that officer had spent a somewhat hilarious evening with the passengers. John was taking off his dress coat when Budge insinuated himself into the little canvas-walled cabin.

"What is it?" asked John.

"Shall I take your coat away to brush, sir?"

"Very well."

Budge took the coat and threw it over his arm.

"If I might make so bold, sir, could you tell me whether it is very hot in China?" he asked, lingering by the door.

"Tolerably hot," answered John.

"Shall we remain there very long, sir?"

"Oh, yes, several weeks, Budge. We must discharge one cargo and load another."

"I suppose, sir, the Chinese being heathens, it is not safe to go ashore."

"It's safe enough if you stay near the factories," answered John carelessly. "The Chinese aren't savages by a long chalk. What Chinaman would be safe in Wapping?"

"True enough, sir."

"Anyhow, I would rather have a Chinaman with all his cracked notions than a Frenchman," added John, as he struggled out of his breeches. "The Chinese do at least keep their opinions to themselves and are in the main honest and dependable."

"What sort of government do they have then, sir?"

"Oh, there's an Emperor who I believe is

descended from the sun, and he rules through mandarins, magistrates I suppose you would call them," answered John, and sat down on his cot.

" Is there any parliament, sir ? "

" No, by God, there's not," said John emphatically. " The lower orders do as they are told and no nonsense about it. If they had any Jacobins there they would tie 'em up to a post and a man with a big sword would slash them all over until they died. I've seen it done for other offences. A pity they can't introduce the method into Europe, it would soon put a stop to all this revolutionary nonsense."

He yawned prodigiously and stretched himself out in his cot.

" Ah, but I'll deal with any sign of revolution aboard this ship " he mumbled sleepily. " Trice 'em up and give 'em a good flogging. I'll teach 'em to be Jacobins and dare to meddle with the Honourable East India Company's ship *Clapham*."

Budge softly withdrew, and the next day the whole lower deck heard with horror that Jacobins had been found in the ship. No man trusted his messmate, and mutual suspicion poisoned all relationships.

CHAPTER XVI

LEAVING the Trade Winds behind her the *Clapham* ran into the calms and squalls of the Equator. Although deep mistrust of one another still disunited the sailors, the older hands gathered together to arrange for the ceremonies of Crossing the Line. With the possibility of squalls assaulting the ship from any direction, the officers of the watch had to be exceedingly alert, and no hands could well be spared for any other purpose than working the ship. Nevertheless, ancient custom had to be observed, and on the day the Line was actually crossed all work was temporarily suspended.

At noon on the great day, while everyone was ostentatiously busy, a mighty hail came from apparently under the bows. Affecting great concern, the officer of the watch summoned the Captain, who, putting his speaking trumpet to his mouth, loudly demanded the name of the person who dared hail the Honourable Company's ship *Clapham*.

"King Neptune," was the reply. "Have you any aboard who have never entered my domains before?"

"To be sure I have, your Majesty," answered the Captain. "I pray you step aboard and examine them."

Immediately King Neptune appeared from the

head where he had been concealed, and climbing on to the forecastle began marching with dignity aft, followed by his retinue. The King himself was crowned with a brass crown, and his face half concealed by a beard of rope yarns. His suite were dressed in every kind of fantastic garment, some had their faces blackened, some were supposed to be mermaids, and some carried weapons. Arrived on the quarter-deck, Neptune condescendingly acknowledged the Captain's humble greeting, and was enthroned on the capstan with his court around him. Then two huge tubs of water were dragged before him, and his session commenced.

“ Bring forth the greenhorns.”

One by one the raw hands or those who had never crossed the Line before were brought before the throne and interrogated in the most personal manner by his majesty before being hurled into one of the water tubs, shaved with a vast razor made of hoop-iron, and ducked several times. When the sailors were all initiated a start was made on the midshipmen. The drenched executioners and barbers by the tubs fairly skinned the faces of the young gentlemen and half-drowned them in the duckings. At last it came the passengers' turn, and Mr. Wooland, squirming and vociferating, was dragged to the capstan.

“ It is our merciful will that you shall be spared the ordeal of shaving if you contribute the sum of one guinea or twenty-one shillings,” pronounced Neptune.

Like a flash Mr. Wooland produced his guinea and fled to his cabin, where he barricaded himself in. Neither the King nor his court wished to duck passengers if they could get money, and they were delighted when all paid with a good grace.

"Have you any more greenhorns?" asked Neptune.

"No, your Majesty," answered the Captain.

"Then it is our merciful pleasure to depart," said the monarch loftily. "I will protect your ship, as it belongs to a loyal subject, and I charge you to keep good order and flog all damned Jacobins."

Leaving the astonished Captain on the quarter-deck, Neptune headed his procession back to the bows, where he vanished over the knightheads with a wave of the hand, and descending to the head came back aboard by one of the bow ports. All hands were then piped to dinner, and Neptune, having removed his beard and other badges of office, laid out the money he had collected in strong waters and stood treat all round. The entire crew was fuddled for the rest of the day.

"There are at all events some loyal hands," said the Captain to John.

"Yes, sir, but there are malcontents as well."

"So I have discovered from the number punished," replied the Captain. "Do your best, Mr. Adams, to find out who the Jacobins are, so that we can watch them carefully."

"I should say Mr. Wooland was the worst, sir, from chance remarks he has made. He

showed a very poor spirit, too, when he was seized for shaving."

"True, Mr. Adams," sighed the Captain. "I have publicly rebuked him several times. But try to find out how many of the crew share his detestable opinions, and we can watch them closely while relaxing our sternness with the others."

"Very good, sir."

John thought the best way of investigating the opinions of the lower deck would be to cross-question Budge, and after that to get the bosun to work. During the afternoon John went down to his cabin and sent for his servant. When Budge appeared it was plain that he was not entirely sober and would probably be only too pleased to hear the sound of his own voice. Having suffered rather severe treatment from the hoop-iron razor the lower part of his face was red and scratched.

"Have you mended that waistcoat of mine?" asked John.

"Not yet, sir, been too busy."

"Busy doing what?" demanded John sharply.

"On deck to-day, sir."

"There has been little work done to-day," countered John. "More likely you were talking to some of our Jacobins."

"No, sir, indeed," exclaimed Budge in horror. "Me talk to a Jacobin! Why when that man Stephens comes near me I walk away."

"Stephens, eh?" muttered John. "What about the others. I am sure I have seen you talking to some of the doubtful characters."

"No, indeed, sir, I avoid them like the plague," protested Budge.

"Give me the names of the men you avoid," commanded John.

Budge obligingly gave a list of all those who had been heard to give vent to subversive opinions and were suspected by the more solid men of causing the increase in strictness. Before the day was done this list was in the hands of the Captain, and the petty officers had been warned whom to watch and to report privately all who were seen talking to Mr. Wooland.

Captain Hayward, feeling that he had unmasked a dangerous conspiracy, invited John to his cabin and brought out his best Madeira, which had just crossed the Equator for the fifth time, to celebrate the occasion.

"Your health, Mr. Adams," he said generously. "Had you not carefully read through that play we might all have been butchered in our bunks and the mutineers gone on the account with the ship. Heaven only knows there are rich enough pickings for a pirate in the East with a ship as well armed and equipped as this one."

"Your health, sir, for dealing with the situation with firmness and discretion," replied John courteously.

"It is enough to turn a man to philosophy, Adams," sighed the Captain. "These things show how decadent we are becoming. Of course we are accustomed to hear of a few thousand French being massacred every day or so, but

beyond a few regrets for human folly we need not take the actions of foreigners very seriously. But to find disaffection in an East Indiaman, Adams. . . . It makes you think, doesn't it ? "

" Yes, sir, it shows things are bad under the surface," agreed John.

" What, to my mind, makes it so bad, is that the real ringleader of the affair is a gentleman, a second cousin of my wife's," continued Captain Hayward. " I admit that when I left England I thought it possible there might be trouble on the lower deck. Look at all those traitors who were being arrested for high treason when we left ; many of them were in actual communication with the Jacobins. However, I little thought there would be an arch revolutionary in the cuddy. You know how dangerous mutiny is when there are sympathisers on the quarter-deck."

" Yes, sir."

" I shall send a confidential report to the President of the Factory when we reach Canton," said Captain Hayward. " Meanwhile, I shall watch young Wooland carefully, and clap him in irons at the least sign of active revolution."

A few days later the *Clapham* encountered the South-East Trade Winds, and with her yards braced sharp up and bowlines hauled out, crashed her way to the southward through the transparent blue seas. Her round bows surmounted by the gilded rails of the head rose and fell in showers of scintillating spray as she hammered her way forward by sheer force. Drops of water driven on to ropes and planks speedily evaporated in

the hot sun, and left little white smudges of salt.

Life on board became easier for the crew, and punishments less, except for the few who by repeating political catch-phrases they did not fully understand had become suspected of Jacobinism. Captain Hayward, with an air of secure authority, paced the decks with a firm tread, and complimented John on the clockwork routine he maintained. One by one fowls and beasts were slaughtered to provide meals for the cuddy table.

After thudding her bulky hull through the Trades, the *Clapham* met with varying winds and was able to make a more easterly course. Since she was approaching a region of strong winds and frequent gales every precaution was taken to prepare her for the worst, every doubtful rope was renewed, preventer parrals put on the yards in case they broke adrift from the masts, extra gaskets made, and the stoutest sails sent aloft and bent in the stead of those used in the tropics. Soon the weather became cold and raw, with gales of wind from the westward.

One day John, coming off his watch with sodden clothes and red-rimmed eyes, was annoyed to find the change of dry garments he had put ready was missing from his cabin. He bellowed angrily for Budge, and when the man did not appear sent a boy in search of him.

“Where the devil have you been,” roared John when Budge peered furtively round the door of his cabin.

"Getting your clothes, sir, from the galley," replied Budge timidly.

"The galley!" snorted John. "What do you want to do with them there? Fry them?"

"No, sir, I thought you'd like them warmed."

He came in bearing the clothes, and offered them to John.

"I admit your intentions were good," said John as he took them. "But there is no need to warm them. I shall have the whole ship laughing at me, and that is bad for discipline."

"I'm sorry, sir, but seeing it was so cold I thought you might like it," replied Budge. "But I suppose you seafaring gentlemen are used to being boiled one day and frozen the next."

John, having stripped off his wet clothes, was struggling into dry ones.

"We are," he agreed. "But you have my permission to dry wet clothes at the galley fire."

"Very good, sir."

"When we get home again you will have some tales to tell of mountainous seas and so forth," remarked John casually as he drew on his coat.

"It makes you quite frightened to look at them, sir," admitted Budge. "I suppose it must be quite safe though, sir, or no ship would ever get to China."

"Safe enough for the present, at all events," said John.

"This ship, sir, being an East Indiaman, doesn't mind a few hurricanes and the like, I take it, sir."

"I wouldn't go so far as that, Budge. Wait until you've been in a hurricane."

"I never thought I'd live to see all I've seen, sir," remarked Budge.

"At all events it's done you no harm," replied John. "A little fresh air and honest work will make you twice the man you were."

"I dare say I must have seemed rather a poor creature to you, sir, and of course I never knew what an important man a Chief Officer was."

"What exactly do you mean by that?" asked John coldly.

"I didn't know, sir, I was dealing with a very influential gentleman," replied Budge sorrowfully. "And I didn't realise how badly the Navy wanted men, and wouldn't even stick at taking them out of an East Indiaman."

"Yes, they may visit us again, you never know," said John, and signified that the conversation was ended by walking out of the cabin.

Since the ports were barred in and the stern windows protected by deadlights, it was dark and stuffy on the gun deck. Lanterns had to be slung on the beams over the officers' mess table to enable them to see to eat. Having doctored a few salt-water boils and attended minor abrasions the Surgeon was reading at the table by the uncertain light of the candles above. When John came and sat down near him he raised his eyes, and then shut the book.

"And how does our noble ship?"

"Well enough," answered John.

"At all events we are making rapid progress. I long to be home again. This is my last voyage."

"We all say that when we're at sea," remarked John. "At all events I was glad enough to get aboard after my last spell ashore."

"It is all very well for you to seek refuge from your disgraceful escapades at sea," replied the Doctor. "But I, being advanced in years, have a more sober outlook. I shall save every penny I get this voyage and settle down ashore."

"That's what the foremast hands always swear they'll do, but by the time they have passed down a street of taverns they can't think what has happened to all the money they started with," said John.

"I refuse to be compared with a foremast hand," retorted the Doctor. "I am a man of parts and learning, and have sense enough to know what is best."

"Then why didn't you leave the sea years ago?" asked John.

"Because, my noble friend, I had no purpose in life," answered the Doctor. "But now I have one, and am going to pursue it."

"You can drink yourself to death just as pleasantly afloat," observed John.

"Bah!" ejaculated the Doctor, and returned to his book.

With a succession of strong winds behind her the *Clapham* soon passed the latitude of the Cape, and began to steer more northward for the Sunda Straits, the other side of the Indian Ocean. It

was customary for East Indiamen to pass close to Madagascar, which in consequence became a nest of pirates and caused every outward-bound Indiaman to keep a very bright look-out and have the guns ready for instant use. Gales became less frequent and the sun warmer.

Mr. Wooland having quarrelled with most of his fellow-passengers, and finding himself unaccountably shunned by the crew, formed the inevitable opinion that he was the victim of a conspiracy. He came to the conclusion that his sublime tragedy had been banned at the instance of a Mr. Muir, who held an important position in the Canton Factory, and was returning after a short two years' leave, of which nearly a year was spent in travelling. In the eyes of Mr. Wooland, Muir was a vindictive and petty tyrant who, because of his seniority, did all he could to snub and humiliate one who was so obviously gifted with poetic genius. Accordingly he shut himself up in his cabin and wrote assiduously. At first he thought he would set a new tradition in English dramatic literature by writing a satiric comedy of manners in heroic couplets, but finding rhymes difficult and needing more thought than blank verse, he abandoned the project and took to prose.

The passage across the Indian Ocean was tranquil and devoid of incident. But though the condition of the ship called for no anxiety the officers felt they were approaching a dangerous coast. The East Indies were Dutch, and a Batavian Republic had been proclaimed, modelled

on and supported by the French, so it was possible that well-armed privateers or ships of war would be lying in wait for British ships in the narrow channels. Owing to the confusion which was known to reign in France it was unlikely any of their men-of-war would be there, but revolutionary Dutchmen were likely to be far worse than French. Captain Hayward took it as axiomatic that the revolutionaries would join forces with the swarming Malay pirates and might thus be able even to capture the *Clapham*, after which, of course, they would slaughter all prisoners by means of the most unspeakable torments and use the ship for committing further atrocities. Every newspaper in London proved beyond doubt that once revolutionaries were given their heads the most frightful cruelties were perpetrated.

For some days the hands had been regularly drilled at the guns, actually firing them instead of going through the motions, when a sail was sighted ahead. The officer of the watch at once beat to quarters, but in a short while it became clear that the stranger was bound in the same direction as themselves, and had no wish to meet them, for she crowded on sail and began to draw ahead.

Captain Hayward promptly made all possible sail and started off in pursuit. All that day the *Clapham* raced along with the foam curling against her gleaming copper and her swelling canvas straining at its confining ropes. The sun set and night came, but sail was not shortened

with a chance of a prize ahead and a hatful of money for all hands.

Morning showed a large ship about a couple of miles ahead, silhouetted against the rising sun. Seeing her pursuer so close she took in her light sails and rounded to.

"Damme, it's another Indiaman!" exclaimed John.

"Aye, the *Earl of Swindon* by the look of her," corroborated the Second Mate.

"Thank God, we can now sail in company," said Captain Hayward. "Let the damned revolutionaries attack with every pirate afloat, the two of us can deal with them."

The stranger displayed the private signal, which was immediately answered by the *Clapham*. Both ships hoisted the red-and-white striped ensign of the Honourable East India Company. A few minutes later the *Clapham* hove-to nearby and hoisted out a boat.

"Land ho!" called the look-out.

Along the horizon Java lay like a pale blue cloud.

"We're as good as there now," remarked John.

"I'll be happier when I see it astern," remarked Doctor Hill, who had just come on deck.

CHAPTER XVII

THE *Clapham* lay anchored at Whampoa, her outward voyage completed. Lest the Chinese should be contaminated by the presence of hairy barbarians, no European ships were permitted to approach nearerer Canton. The muddy river was crowded with junks and sampans tending the small fleet of East Indiamen and country ships, as vessels trading exclusively from India to other Asiatic ports were called. The latter did a brisk trade in smuggled opium.

Once the ship was moored Captain Hayward went ashore in a boat shaped like a dragon and gay with streamers, which was pulled by sixty Chinamen. John, left in charge, was busy unbending sail, superintending the unloading of cargo, and keeping a watchful eye on both Chinamen and crew. Guards with loaded muskets had to be posted both day and night to prevent thieving, especially of the ship's copper sheathing, which seemed to be an irresistible attraction. Naked Celestials would swim quietly alongside in the darkness and detach as many sheets as they were able from just under the water line. Every night one of the Indiamen would provide an armed boat to row guard for the fleet. After some weeks, when the last of the cargo had been discharged into waiting sampans, John had a little leisure, since it would be a long time before

the tea was shipped. His own private freight he had disposed of favourably to one of the clique of Chinese merchants, who had the monopoly of trading with the Company and went bond for all the ships and sailors before the Viceroy of Canton and his attendant mandarins. He began to consider what would be best to take home, and discussed the matter thoroughly with the officers of other ships.

There being no passengers to need humouring and no Captain to monopolise the conversation, John decided to have a dinner party on board, and sent invitations to the Chief and Second Mates of the four other Indiamen, and the Masters or Chief Mates of a dozen country ships. On the appointed day all the guests in their best uniforms were rowed alongside, and while their boats' crews were taken under the wing of *Clapham*'s men, the officers gathered aft, where a large horse-shoe table had been set under the shade of the quarter-deck awning. Since the *Clapham* had no band, musicians were borrowed from the *Earl of Swindon*, and they played lively airs, to the manifest disgust of the numerous Chinese aboard or alongside.

Two dozen officers sat down in order of seniority and the meal began. At first conversation was desultory, since the guests did not know one another, but after the wine had passed freely a few times barriers of reserve were broken down and tongues wagged freely on professional matters. A ship called the *Westminster* having just arrived direct from England her officers were

pressed for the latest news, which was some months fresher than the *Clapham's*. Guests did not hesitate to crane forward and shout questions.

John, with the Chief Officer of the *Earl of Swindon* on his right, presided over the feast and took wine with every one of his guests until he became slightly fuddled. The *Earl of Swindon's* Mate droned on interminably about the superiority of the Bengal trade over the Chinese.

" You can say what you like, Adams, but I think a few cheerful passengers make all the difference to a voyage. Now, on our last voyage home from Calcutta we had a Collector and his family, five daughters, and every one of them a little rogue. I must say the tropics thaw out these young misses, and they become as playful as kittens. One of them had her berth by the second port from aft and it being peace time we had no gun in it. I could get out into the mizzen chains and slip into that port as easy as winking."

" Risky," commented John.

" Not a bit of it, old lad, not a bit of it. Why, when I was in the old *True Blue* I once went over the taffrail on the ensign halyards and swung into a stern window, then out again and up on deck before her husband had finished the game of chess I saw him start. When I get command I shall put the prettiest wench aboard right over my cabin, and then cut a neat hole in the floor of her quarter-gallery."

" I'd rather have a ship with no passengers at all," said John. " And after all, when you're at

sea it's best to forget all about women. I find there's enough to keep any man busy."

"The game's all the more fun at sea," replied the other. "There are more barriers, less time, greater dangers than ashore. A slip and you're overboard, a discovery and your career is finished. Now that's a game worth playing and the prize is all the better for being a few stolen moments after weeks of preparation."

"Waste of time and trouble, they aren't worth it," remarked John.

"Ah well, it is all a question of taste," said the other. "At all events I can't stand these Chinese girls."

"I like 'em well enough," replied John. "There's no nonsense about them, they make no bones of the fact they're out for money."

"Have you seen Old Mother Samshoo's latest?" inquired one of the officers sitting near. "A regular little bit of porcelain."

"You should see my girl," cried another.

"Not to be compared with my passengers," said the *Earl of Swindon's* mate. "These laundry wenches are all yellow with black hair and pig's eyes and no bigger than a child of six."

"I remember in Calcutta some years back we had a Judgment of Paris," said an officer. "Everyone was bragging about his girl, so we had the whole lot aboard the *Sandwich*, judged them and awarded prizes."

"Let's do that here," clamoured several.

"It would certainly make the party go," commented the *Earl of Swindon*.

"We can't have that sort of thing aboard this ship," said John. "Captain would never approve."

"But your Commander is ashore," objected an officer.

"It's none of his business," said another.

"It'll give us newcomers a chance to pick our fancy," observed the *Westminster's* Second Mate.

"I shan't allow my girl to be exposed like a cow at Smithfield," declared the officer who had compared her to porcelain.

"Nor I mine," said another.

"The whole proceeding would be indecorous and scarcely in accordance with the traditions of the Honourable East India Company," said a prim officer.

"On the contrary, we have a precedent," contradicted someone.

A fierce argument broke out between traditionalists and amorists. Having drunk deeply many lost their tempers, shouted and banged their fists on the table.

"Gentlemen, please," cried John in an effort to restore order.

He was disregarded, and the tumult grew until one officer jumped to his feet.

"Let us not quarrel, gentlemen," he shouted. "I have a solution. I invite you all aboard the *Mahratta* to-morrow, when we will judge who is the fairest of *tanka* girls. If any gentleman disapproves he is at liberty to stay away."

This suggestion was received with applause and quarrels were patched up at once. Dinner

being over and toasts having started, the officers coalesced into groups round the table and exchanged reminiscences. Doctor Hill, who had been placed in a lowly position, approached the head of the table and got into conversation with John and the *Earl of Swindon's* Mate.

"But events have proved my point," the guest was saying. "Had these gentlemen had female passengers on the voyage they would not have been so keen to set up as connoisseurs of yellow hides."

"I haven't the slightest wish to attend such a ceremony," said John. "Not the slightest wish."

"Well, I have," cried the guest. "I shall be present, and why? Because there were no female passengers on the voyage."

"You said just now . . ." began John muzzily.

"It's a lie! I said nothing of the sort," cried the guest. "We came here by way of Bombay, and I have been over a year from home, and no female passengers, but only a pack of damned soldiers. Of course I shall be present."

"Disgraceful!" exclaimed John. "To use one of the Company's ships for such a purpose."

"Very proper, there's a precedent."

"Sets a bad example to the crew," protested John. "It's bad enough to have Jacobins aboard, but . . ."

"Jacobin! You call me a Jacobin?" roared the guest.

"No, I said Jacobins in our crew," explained John.

"Jacobins in your crew, damme, so there are in mine, or were. Give me your hand, old lad, we're friends."

The two officers shook hands with owlish solemnity.

"I owe apology," muttered John.

"No, no, I'm quite wrong, absolutely wrong," protested his guest. "Let's sing."

"Have another drink," urged John.

When the stars were mirrored in the still water and the anchorage was at peace in the night, a procession of boats pulled jerkily from the *Clapham* bearing the insensible officers back to their ships. A Chinese on board marvelling at the weakness of the foreign devils who could not even drink a bottle of brandy without going mad asked a watchman why they behaved so strangely.

"What the devil can a man do in this god-forsaken hole except get drunk?" asked the watchman. "Nothing to see, nothing to do, give me Limehouse."

Unenlightened, the Chinaman squatted down on the deck and sank into a state resembling death.

While waiting for the tea crop time hung heavy on the hands of the officers. John made one or two trips up to Canton, but except for the small area round the European factories which he already knew he never ventured farther. He visited other ships, and generally came back drunk or else primed their officers with drink aboard the *Clapham*. For all China was regarded as an outlandish sort of place where a sailor nearly died

of boredom. At Bombay and Calcutta there were plenty of Englishmen ashore to give dinners and dances, and the country was under the Company's rule, but there were not more than thirty English in the whole of China, and they were a dozen miles from the anchorage. In sheer desperation he at last hired a *tanka* girl, as the women of the floating laundries were called.

The girl whom he dubbed Cae Long Lie took up her quarters aboard with several others of the sisterhood. All were quiet and kept their protectors' linen in perfect order besides obliging in other respects. John found her company preferable to that of his brother officers, with whom he had lived long enough to tire of. She was very small and spoke the smattering of pidgin English she knew in a funny little voice which amused him.

At last the tea started coming on board in its wooden chests painted with Chinese characters. At once all boredom vanished and its place was taken by the work of stowing cargo and getting the ship ready for sea once again. Besides the tea there were chests of china, bales of silk and crates of lacquered wares. The officers for their private trade shipped numberless kinds of merchandise, ranging from musk and ginger to large pieces of furniture. Doctor Hill carefully chose drugs, even boarding the country ships and buying smuggled opium at an enhanced price in order to make his collection complete.

John went up to Canton for a final dinner at

the Factory, and as it was customary for every guest to bring his own servant he had to hire a Chinaman for the occasion. He and two other officers were rowed up through the dense mass of sampans which choked the river and provided a permanent home for hundreds of thousands of natives. After landing at the special steps belonging to the Factory the guests walked across the compound and ascended an imposing staircase to the first floor of the building, where the dining and reception rooms were situated. After being formally received by the President, the guests to the number of forty or so sipped sherry and gossiped together in low voices until the great double doors of the dining room were flung back and an English butler announced that dinner was served. Then in order of precedence they filed into the dining room, where forty Chinese servants stood in ranks ready to slip behind their master's chairs. When all were comfortably seated at the great mahogany table a banquet was served consisting of a profusion of solid foods washed down by bottles of excellent wine. Being as it were on holy ground, a building leased from the Chinese merchants by the Honourable Company itself, everyone was very much on his best behaviour, although not entirely sober, by the time the dessert was reached. With magnificent condescension the President himself took wine with every guest in order of seniority, a courtesy which made him swallow forty glasses of claret, and then proposed the health of the King, the Honourable Company,

and the guests, which meant an additional three glasses of port.

John was placed just above one of the Factory's officials who was due for leave but could not make up his mind in which ship to travel home. John at once began singing the praises of the *Clapham*.

"Staunchest ship in the service," he pronounced. "Well armed, plenty of room, and a good commander. It won't prove expensive, either. Captain Hayward I dare swear will take you for a hundred and twenty pound."

The official was about to reply when the President, who was beginning to suffer from the effects of his hospitality, rose unsteadily to his feet, motioned for silence, and started to recite Gray's "Elegy." Although the performance was by no means first-class all applauded it politely. After that nothing would content the commander of the *Westminster* until he was permitted to sing a popular ballad about breaking hearts neath weeping willow trees. He was followed by Captain Hayward, who, in the falsetto tenor fashionable at the time, sang about the rapture he experienced when seeing a young person gathering roses at a cottage door.

The official beside John was visibly moved.

"Ah, England and a cottage," he sighed. "Think what that means to exiles like myself, living in a barbarous land under the sway of an irresponsible tyrant. I yearn for free institutions, an equitable climate and the polished civilisation only to be found in England. When I get home

I shall find myself surrounded by objects of beauty and veneration, while here I can only gaze on crudities. Everything in China has a foreign look about it."

"True enough," agreed John. "The Company ought to conquer the place as it did India, and spread civilisation. Ten thousand white troops with artillery could easily perform the task, if there was a naval squadron of a few ships of the line with the usual frigates and sloops."

"The Company, sir, should rule Asia," declared the official. "It is a disgrace that I, that all of us should be under the domination of a native prince. The insults we suffer and the bribes we have to pay!"

John instinctively looked at the portrait of King George III which hung above the President's chair, and depicted the monarch in full coronation robes. The bright light of a hundred wax candles in the great cut-glass chandelier made the face in the picture appear slightly bilious.

"There's dignity for you," remarked the official, following John's gaze.

"Aye, if he doesn't go mad again," replied John. "Anyhow, he's better than a Chinaman."

"In a few months I shall be able to see him, actually see him," murmured the official reverently.

"Aw," yawned John, and dozed for the rest of the evening until his Chinese servant prodded him.

The party broke up somewhat unsteadily, and John, after taking formal leave of his host,

stumbled to his boat in a sort of trance. He slept soundly all the way back to the ship.

The next day the Captain came on board and was pleased to find the greater part of the cargo stowed and all ready for sea. He made a formal inspection, and then retired to his cabin, from which he did not emerge for the remainder of the day. He summoned John, and after dealing with matters concerning the cargo spoke of the coming voyage.

"We shall sail in convoy with this ship as flagship," he announced with pride. "All the country craft will come with us as far as Java, and then the Indiamen will proceed to St. Helena, where they will join the India convoy and all sail home together. I hope you will see that this ship leads the others in smartness and gunnery. Judging from reports French privateers have begun to operate in the Indian ocean, but as yet no adequate naval force has come out from England."

"I am sure all hands will do their best when they hear you are commodore, sir," answered John. "As for fighting, it would be a welcome relief, but I cannot say I think it very probable. Nothing ever seems to happen to a ship like this."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE *Clapham* anchored in the Downs a year and a half to the day since her departure. The Indian-men sailed to the anchorage in a straggling line. With all sail set and their black and yellow hulls glistening they swept majestically on, then the swelling pyramids of canvas split, blew into shapeless bags of wind, and finally shrank on to the black-painted spars which spread them as ship after ship with a mighty splash let go her anchor. All the wealth of the Indies was contained in these oaken hulls.

As each ship arrived she was surrounded by a swarm of boats. First the Customs officers clambered aboard with their tide watchers, who would remain on board until she was unloaded, lest dutiable articles should slip ashore free of tax. Then came boatmen anxious to land passengers and recommend them to good inns. Bumboat women and peddlars offered fresh vegetables and new clothes to the sailors.

The sight of the distant hills and the sound of English voices were delicious to the invalid soldiers and Company's servants on leave or retiring. Rich nabobs who had amassed fortunes without enriching their employers gazed condescendingly at Kent, and planned the fine parks and noble country seats they would buy.

They ordered their servants to secure a boat so that they might go ashore at once and by hiring a post chaise be in London that night. All who were able tipped the cuddy servants, shook hands with the officers, and left the ship as fast as they possibly could.

When the sails were furled and the *Clapham* in proper order John was able to leave the deck and attend to his own affairs. The first thing he did was to beckon a Deal boatman of his acquaintance to his cabin and shut the door firmly.

The boatman, apparently a portly man, was no sooner in the cabin than he began undressing as fast as he could. First he removed a thick frieze coat, then a worsted boat skirt, his waistcoat, hat and breeches. While he was so employed John produced from his chest a number of packages wrapped in silk. Laying the packages on the cot the boatman produced what appeared to be a cotton bag into which he carefully poured the contents of some of the packages. When it was reasonably full he tied the bag over his buttock with tapes which were sown on to it. A few more bags were filled, which were in their turn tied over his stomach, loins, upper arms and chest, and, finally, after being helped back into his clothes by John, he balanced the last bag on his head and crammed on his hat.

"There's fifteen pounds' worth of tea there," said John. "So be very careful you don't get wet and spoil it."

"Trust me, sir," replied the man confidently. "I must have landed tons of it and never a drop

spoilt. I'll let you have your money to-morrow, sir, when I take the second lot."

He waddled out of the cabin, and after lounging about for some time on deck and exchanging a few remarks on the weather with the Customs officers he dropped into his boat and sailed off.

John meanwhile had sought out Doctor Hill.

"We are home at last, Adams, and I for one am mighty glad," said the Doctor feelingly. "No more sea for me. Do you think the Captain will let me leave the ship here?"

"Yes, we don't want you any more now," answered John. "As soon as the wind serves we shall sail to the Thames, but that may not be for some days."

"I am burning to get ashore," remarked Hill.

"If you are going to London direct you will, I am sure, take a letter for me," said John. "I always write to my father. Damme, it'll be strange seeing the old fellow again. The next time I'm anchored here I hope I shall be in command, and it will all be through him."

"You had better send it through the post ; I shall be remaining here for some days," answered the Doctor.

"What I really wanted to see you about is those drugs," explained John. "If any are dutiable I can get them smuggled for you, if not I should advise you to see my father if you want to sell them at the best advantage."

"I am relieved to hear that is the reason for this visit," said the Doctor. "I should be most

grateful if you could get them smuggled to the Blue Boar, where I shall be staying."

"It's no trouble," John assured him generously and turned to go, but suddenly stopped.

"By the way, Mary must be ashore here somewhere," he exclaimed.

Hill swallowed hard but said nothing.

"I hope she managed to get a fresh start in life with those twenty-two guineas I let you have," continued John.

"Twenty-two guineas," groaned Hill.

"I'll ask the boatmen about her," decided John. "The smugglers to-morrow are bound to know everybody's business. What was her name, Sarah Smith?"

"I must be getting ashore," said the Doctor firmly.

"If you see her tell her I shall try to get ashore to-morrow or the day after," requested John. "I have no money now, but will have some by then."

"I can't make any promises," answered the Doctor.

"No, of course you have your own affairs to attend to," agreed John. "But if you should drop across her give her my love."

He wandered back to his cabin to write to his father.

The moment he was left alone Doctor Hill crammed a few clothes into a valise and with breathless haste hurried to the Captain's cabin. Hayward was busy finishing his journal, which he would have to submit to the Court of Directors

as soon as he got to London, and paid little attention to the numerous reasons the Doctor advanced for going ashore. At last he burst out testily :

“ For God’s sake go ashore man and stay there. Can’t you see I’m busy.”

Hill left the cabin at once without waiting to say thank you, and seizing his valise dashed on deck shouting for a boat. In a few moments he was sliding down the manropes without even waiting to use the battens nailed to the ship’s side, and fell in a heap into a waiting boat. While the crew pushed off and hoisted the sail he heaved a great sigh of relief.

As the boat beat in toward the shore Hill had ample opportunity for taking a final look at the *Clapham*.

“ Was you a passenger, sir ? ” asked one of the boatmen.

“ No, I’m the Surgeon of that ship, but I have to go ashore on business.”

“ Oh, in that case, sir, the fare will only be a guinea.”

“ And that’s twenty shillings too much,” snorted Hill.

“ We’ll put you back aboard, sir, now for nothing if you’d rather not pay,” said the man politely.

“ Take your guinea and I hope you drink yourself to death with it,” growled the Doctor, lugging out a very thin purse and selecting one of the few coins in it.

“ Thank you, sir, and may you do the same with your pay when you get it.”

After that Hill maintained a gloomy silence. He had little money and would have to go to London to draw his pay when the *Clapham* docked, which might not be for two or three weeks. Meanwhile he would have to trust to getting his drugs smuggled ashore or else trust to luck in getting credit. As soon as he landed he spurned all offers from the boat's crew and loafers to carry his bag, and grasping it firmly he trudged up the steep beach towards the inn where he had left Mary.

On arriving he went into the bar, and setting down his valise on one of the rough tables called for the landlord. When that worthy, a retired pilot, appeared, he motioned him to sit down close to him. After casting a hasty glance at the few regular customers who were stolidly swallowing pints near the fire, Hill leant forward and in a low voice spoke.

"I am the Surgeon of the *Clapham*, East Indiaman. Possibly you will recollect that some eighteen months ago I deposited a patient here, a female patient."

"Why yes, sir, I remember your face well," cried the landlord. "And as for the *Clapham*, I know her well, too. I took her up to the Nore when she came back from her first voyage. That was my last job, sir, for when I got back I found old Will Ransley was dead and this place up for sale. Why, it only seems like yesterday when Captain Willett, who was commanding the *Clapham* then, said to me, 'Pilot, you're the damnedest fool who ever defiled the decks of one

of the Company's ships.' That was on account of my forgetting it was leap-year and reckoning the tide for the first of March instead of the twenty-ninth of February."

"Yes, yes, a pardonable error," said Hill quickly. "But with regard to my patient, did she recover?"

"Why, yes, sir, the very next day she was out of bed, although my daughter tried to stop her, and she wouldn't let me have the barber in to bleed her," replied the landlord. "And well she didn't, the baggage, for there was little enough amiss with her except the beginnings of a big belly. Well, I suppose it was all for the best she feigned illness and escaped being brought to bed at sea."

The Doctor emitted a nondescript sort of noise, which the landlord disregarded.

"Having a store of money by her, of course, she was able to fend for herself well enough considering her station in life," continued the landlord. "She's bought herself a share in old Mother Robb's cookshop, and has brought a lot of business to the place through so many young lads having their eye on her. But it's curious, sir, you suddenly returning like this. It seems only like yesterday when you came in with the boatmen carrying what looked like a corp. Now you are here, sir, I should be honoured if you would have a glass with me for old time's sake, and I can promise you, sir, not a drop of good liquor in this tavern has ever paid duty."

"Thank you," murmured the Doctor.

The landlord put his mouth close to Hill's ear and whispered. "If you have a few pounds of tea aboard, sir, I can send my lads to get it. I'm a personal friend of all the most respectable smugglers, sir."

"My friends on board are arranging for a few cases of drugs to be brought here to-morrow," answered Hill softly.

"I will send for them now, sir ; there may be a fair wind to-morrow. It's not safe to wait," said the landlord, and hailed one of his customers by the fire.

While the Doctor was tracing Mary ashore, John, having finished his letter, was making enquiries of the various inhabitants of Deal who were to be found aboard the *Clapham*. The first man he tackled was a tide watcher, a minion of the Customs House, and therefore likely to be about as popular in Kent as a Jacobin in St. James's. However, like most longshoremen, the tide watcher knew every ship which had anchored in the Downs for years past, and could remember every fact of interest connected with them.

"Let me see, didn't you sail the day after that convict ship was wrecked, sir," asked the man, making an effort to remember.

"There were two ships wrecked the night before we sailed," answered John.

"That's right, I know now," said the tide watcher. "And the day before the *Skyrocket*, sloop, came in with a French lugger she had taken in an action with three of them, and poor old Joe Dingle had his leg shot off. Just before

you sailed you say you landed a sick passenger. Well, sir, I don't know nothing about that."

John thanked him for his information and tried the Pilot, who was all ready to take the *Clapham* as far as the Nore, where a Thames pilot would come aboard.

"Landed a sick passenger," said the Pilot. "I thought it was a passenger's servant called Sarah."

"Yes, that's her," cried John. "Do you know where she is now?"

"Do I know, of course I know," replied the Pilot with dignity. "I know everyone in Deal. She's keeping a cookshop with old Mother Robb, and doing a good trade too."

"Thank you," said John, and after looking at the sky a moment changed the subject. "When do you think we shall get a fair wind?"

"Not for a day or two," opined the Pilot. "When the moon changes I dare say the wind will come round to the east or south. But it'll stay in the west-nor'-west for a day or two yet."

"Ah, well, I shan't be sorry to see the Thames again," said John, and went below on to the main deck.

Captain Hayward was still busy with his journal, and did not welcome interruption.

"Might I go ashore for an hour or two, sir?" asked John on entering. "I have some private business."

"Yes, yes," answered Hayward without looking up from his writing. "But you must be back before sunset."

"Thank you, sir, I shall be back before then."

On returning to the quarter-deck he requested the officer of the watch to man yard and stay tackles and hoist out the gig, then he detailed a midshipman to ask all officers whether they wanted any commissions performed ashore, as a boat was just going. A few minutes later he was being rowed ashore.

Mother Robb's cook-shop was a low room in a crooked old house in a narrow alley. The interior was dark and smelt strongly of cooking even when the huge fire in the open hearth was out and the spits and cauldrons cold. A few long scrubbed tables with forms along each side took up all the front of the shop so that patrons could eat their dinners and watch contorted figures appear in the little glass squares of the small windows as people passed outside.

Doctor Hill carefully reconnoitred the outside, then peered carefully over the half door, but seeing no customers he cast aside all caution and strode manfully into the room. Except for a large pot which was simmering on the fire and emitting a strong smell of cabbage, there was no sign of any activity. The Doctor coughed apologetically and sat down on one of the hard benches near the door. He had scarcely done so when a grubby urchin dashed in at the door, slammed down a red and bleeding hunk of beef on the table by the Doctor, gave an ear-splitting yell, and ran out as fast as he had come in. There was a slight shuffling in the semi-darkness at the back of the shop, and an old woman in greasy

clothes with her head wrapped in a shawl slopped into light.

"It's not a mite of use your coming here now," she informed the Doctor. "Dinner won't be ready for two hours yet."

Without vouchsafing the Doctor any chance of replying she shuffled away, but returned shortly with a large dish on which she put the meat.

"Madam, I believe a Miss Sarah Jones lives here," began the Doctor blandly.

"*Missis* Sarah Jones, if you please," cried the old woman.

"Precisely, Mrs. Sarah Jones," corrected Hill. "She lives here."

"She does, and what business is that of yours?"

"I am the Surgeon of the *Clapham*, East Indiaman, Doctor Hill is my name," explained Hill. "Since she was once my patient I should very much like to see her again if you would be kind enough to tell her I'm here."

"Ho!" exclaimed the old woman, and set the beef down again on the table.

"I feel sure she will be glad to see me," continued the Doctor. "We are old friends, you know. I brought her ashore from the *Clapham* just before she sailed since I had found her health would not permit of a long voyage."

The old woman sniffed.

"You're a surgeon, are you? An old friend, eh?"

"I am devoted to her," declared the Doctor.

"Oh, you horrid, nasty, wicked old beast!" cried the old woman. "I see what you are after,

my man. A likely thing it is that a doctor would make friends with a poor working girl ! Friend, indeed ! And having nearly ruined the poor lamb you come back here ! ”

“ But, my good woman ”

“ But be damned,” shouted the good woman. “ She never would say who was the father, except that he was a gentleman, and now you come here as bold as brass after she has been watching the ships for weeks and asking which is the *Clapham* to try to lead her astray again. It’s no use your going red at me, my man, I know what’s at the back of your mind.”

“ Silence, woman,” commanded the Doctor.

“ I will not be silent, I shall tell the Reverend Pringle,” roared the old woman. “ I won’t have goings on in my house. You get out of here.”

“ I shall do nothing of the kind,” replied the Doctor. “ You have very kindly fathered a bastard on to me and obligingly taken away my reputation, although you have never seen me before in your life. I came here to see Sarah Jones, and here I remain until Sarah Jones appears. If you want to be rid of me quickly you had better go and fetch her.”

“ Which I will not,” said the old woman. “ She’s gone down to the beach to look at the ships, your ship.”

“ Then I will sit here until she returns,” declared Hill.

The old woman slopped away with the beef and started preparing it for cooking, mumbling

as she did so. Hill sat stolidly at the table, drumming with his fingers nervously.

"Are there many doctors here?" he asked at length.

"Yes," snapped the old woman.

Hill was about to ask about the extent of their practices when he heard the door open behind him. He turned and confronted Mary, who was carrying a child.

CHAPTER XIX

"Why, it's Doctor Hill," cried Mary. "How do you do, sir?"

"For heaven's sake don't call me sir," replied the Doctor.

Mary thrust out a hand, which Hill squeezed excitedly and then, disengaging herself, went to one corner of the room, where she put her child into a basket lined with blankets. When she came back Hill had recovered his self-possession and was ready to be the perfect physician for the benefit of the old woman busy by the fire.

"I trust you are fully recovered from your illness and there are no signs of the symptoms recurring," he began. "When we landed you I was confident that recovery was certain."

"I may get the same thing again," replied Mary.

"I hope not," said Hill. "So you have established yourself here and I hear you are doing well. If you would care to listen I have a private suggestion to make."

Mary sat down at the table opposite to him and rested her chin on her hands. Hill discovered that she was prettier even than he thought and seemed to be happier than when he left her.

"I hear all sorts of suggestions," said Mary. "You have made them before, you know, when

you were attending me in that big building in London."

"Never mind the past," answered Hill quickly. "It does not reflect credit on either of us. It's the future which concerns us now."

"I am well enough situated now not to mind the future," said Mary. "I have learnt a lot since we parted, and thanks to the money you left with me I can fend for myself and Johnny too."

"Johnny!" exclaimed the Doctor in tones of disgust.

"He's a fine boy," said Mary proudly.

"Aye, and a fine father he had," sniffed Hill.

"Yes, he had a fine father," cried Mary. "And I'm not ashamed of him. I'm glad he gave me Johnny, and I owe everything to him. Life, everything."

"I had a share in saving you," protested Hill.

"Yes, but it was John who made you come and see me and got you a berth," retorted Mary.

"True, I did little enough," confessed Hill. "But now John is married and likely to become commander of an East Indiaman next voyage. I don't suppose you will ever see him again."

"Oh, won't I? As a matter of fact I'm going out to the *Clapham* this afternoon to show Johnny to him," replied Mary. "And he told me when he married he hated the sight of Miss Georgina, and was only doing it for money and because his father made him. You won't make me jealous with your Georgina, I know her too well."

"My dear, I didn't come here to quarrel with you," protested Hill mildly. "I only want to

make sure that your future is secure. Now I am leaving the sea and have decided to set up ashore I thought of a plan whereby I could help you."

"I'm well enough situated," said Mary. "And if ever I get lonely there's lots of pilots and smugglers who would marry me if they got the chance. There's Tom Reynolds, who's a fine figure of a man and very respectable and the richest smuggler in Kent, who runs three cargoes a week without fail, and he gave me a fathom of lace only last Tuesday as well as a French cap and a big bottle of scent. He's glad Johnny's a sailor's son, and said he would settle a hundred pound on him and bring him up to be the best smuggler in the world if I would marry him. And Bromley the pilot who takes the men-of-war in and out wants to marry me and he has got five hundred guineas stowed away in an old pair of breeches up his chimney. I know because he showed them to me and said he was sorry the soot made them so dirty. He thinks Johnny is a fine boy and will make him the best pilot in the world, and he said no girl had really done anything very wrong if she had some fun with a sailor."

"So the men of Deal value you at your true worth," remarked the Doctor gloomily.

"Yes, when I was in London I was never allowed out of the house, and except from the tradesmen's boys I never got any compliments at all," replied Mary. "But here all the men like me and would do anything for me."

"So would I," declared the Doctor. "I have no five hundred guineas up the chimney, and

doubt whether I could make your son the best pilot in the world by my own unaided efforts, but if you will marry me, Mary, I can at least give you the position of a lady."

Mary gave a gasp of surprise and stared at him in wonder for a few moments.

"I am sure there is room for another doctor here," continued Hill. "I could, no doubt, make a speciality of visiting patients afloat and treating your smuggler friends in secret after they have come off badly in one of their frequent affrays with the Customs officers."

"But you're quite old h !" exclaimed Mary, still wondering.

"Then you will become a widow all the sooner, my dear," replied Hill.

The old woman, who had been busied round the fire and had set the beef spluttering and sizzling on the spit, had listened as well as she was able to every word spoken. She chuckled with glee when she heard a real gentleman propose to her partner.

Before she could think of any words of encouragement a shape passed by the twisted glass of the window and there was a sharp rap on the door. While Hill was continuing his proposal the old woman hobbled to the door and saw a large officer in uniform standing before her.

"Is this Old Mother Robb's cookshop?" demanded the officer.

"Old, indeed!" exclaimed the lady. "My name is Robb, sir, and if I am a mother I'm not ashamed of the fact, sir."

"Be good enough to tell Miss Sarah Smith that John Adams, the Chief Officer of the *Clapham*, Indiaman, is here."

"Sarah Smith . . ." began the old woman, but she was interrupted by a cry from Mary, who rushed forward.

"John!"

"Mary!" cried John, and embraced her, to the anguish of Hill who sank back against the wall.

"Come and see our Johnny," cried Mary, leading him into the shop. "He's asleep now, but you will see he's just like you."

John was escorted to the corner and vouchsafed a view of a very small head sparsely covered with light brown hair.

"Damme, is that mine?" he asked.

"He's ours," corrected Mary.

"Well, I'm damned," said John, who felt that words were inadequate for the occasion.

"When he gets bigger he'll be a sailor too," said Mary proudly.

"Aye, the very thing. Make a man of him," agreed John, and stared foolishly at the little head.

He automatically put his arm round Mary's waist and swung her round towards the light. Then he saw Doctor Hill.

"You here?" he said coldly.

"Do I look an unsubstantial ghost?" demanded the Doctor.

"I thought you had urgent business to attend to," said John, relaxing his hold on Mary.

"I have, here," answered Hill sourly.

"Might I ask what it is?"

"I am not ashamed to tell you, sir, although it is no business of yours," replied Hill. "I have come here to ask the hand in marriage of a very sweet young lady who was taken advantage of by a heartless brute."

"That means me," remarked John in a loud aside to Mary.

"Yes, it does mean you," cried the Doctor. "You made the danger of death the excuse for a seduction."

"And you did your best without any excuse," retorted John.

"It is only natural for a man when he sees that another has won to try his fortune too," countered the Doctor. "My conduct may have been unprofessional, but it was nothing more. However, the past is over and done with, and I am making plans for the future."

"Plan away," said John, and then ignoring him turned to Mary. "I've brought you a little present."

He put his hand in his pocket and produced a small package wrapped in silk, which he put down on the table and carefully unwrapped. Inside was a painted wooden box which on being opened revealed a little Chinese figure of a mandarin who nodded his head when touched.

"Johnny will like it," cried Mary, clapping her hands.

"Mind he doesn't break it," cautioned John.

John gave the figure a flick and set the head nodding like mad, whereat both he and Mary

laughed. While they played another customer came into the shop and looked about him. It was the boatman who had smuggled John's tea.

"Mr. Mate, sir," called the man. "The wind's dropping and some of the ships are heaving short."

"Damn!" exclaimed John.

"A calm now will mean a fair wind for the Nore at the turn of the tide," added the smuggler. "So if you're wise, sir, you'll go aboard now and I can slip the rest of that tea ashore for you."

"It'll be time enough when the tide turns," began John. "I"

The dull boom of a gun came faintly through the open doorway.

"Sounds as though all boats are being recalled," said the smuggler.

"Yes, that was a twelve-pounder by the sound of it," remarked John. "Well, I suppose it's my duty to go."

Without wasting any further words on the matter he caught Mary round the waist, kissed her, and after favouring the Doctor with an ironic bow walked to the door.

"I'll be back again by coach in a few days," he called to Mary, and with a wave of his hand disappeared.

Mary sighed.

"There, you see," said the Doctor. "Here one minute and gone the next, like all sailors. Now, if you married me you would always have a friend and protector at hand."

" So I would if I married anyone else," retorted Mary.

" Not if you married your smuggler or pilot," pointed out the Doctor. " The one is likely at any moment to be apprehended for his misdeeds, and either sent to serve in the Navy or else be transported, while the other would be days and weeks away in charge of ships and might never return. With me you would be able to enjoy a position superior to the others."

" I don't know that I want to be superior to anyone," replied Mary. " I'm happy enough here with men of my own sort."

" I have no wish to hurry you, and I shall be here for several days," said the Doctor. " Think it over."

He wandered slowly out of the shop and automatically found his way to the beach. Gazing abstractedly at the anchored shipping he noticed that sails were being loosed and boats being hoisted in. The folds of canvas stirring sluggishly under the influence of little catpaws brought him at once to a sense of the present. The ships were Indiamen, and the light airs which fanned over the surface of the smooth sea were from the south. In other words they were preparing to leave at the earliest opportunity for the Thames.

While the Doctor stood on the beach, John in his cabin aboard the *Clapham* was helping a distended smuggler into his clothes. When the man with his hidden load of tea was at last restored to normal he put a flipper-like arm into the pocket

of his bulging coat and painfully extracted a bag of guineas.

John counted them carefully, and finding the amount correct pocketed the money and shepherded the smuggler on to the quarter-deck, where he ostentatiously presented him with some letters to post and tipped him.

"As soon as you get under way," whispered the smuggler. "The boat will be waiting."

John nodded and strolled back to his cabin, where he found another smuggler hanging about the door.

"About them drugs, sir, they're all ready with sinkers attached," announced the man.

"Very well, the moment we get under way slip them out of the stern port. There will be a boat waiting," answered John. "Then come up straight to the gangway and jump into your own boat, which I will detain."

"Very good, sir."

John had scarcely got rid of the man when a midshipman came running down to tell him the Captain desired his presence on deck. John went smartly to his post.

"Stand by to weigh anchor, Mr. Adams," said the Captain. "We shall sail the moment the tide serves. I admire the quickness with which you returned the moment the wind shifted."

"Thank you, sir."

"I hope it did not interrupt any serious business."

"No, sir, nothing at all important," John

assured him, and went forward to superintend the weighing of the anchor.

Half an hour later, with every sail set and drawing, the *Clapham* reached slowly out of the Downs in company with a fleet of vessels all anxious to make the Thames. Although the sky was clear and the sun warm there was an imperceptible haze over the sea, so that she gradually dissolved into the purple distance.

Sitting on an old cask on the beach Doctor Hill watched the Indiaman fade away to the northward. He picked up a handful of pebbles and threw them idly at a desiccated starfish which lay at long range.

"So much for Mr. John Adams," he murmured, as a stone hit the starfish in the middle. "I shan't be troubled with him again."

He rose ponderously from his seat and, favouring the busy beach with a contemptuous glance, turned his back on the ranks of boats and scurrying sailors and headed once more for the town. When he came back to the cookshop he found dinner in full swing and a number of burly men with very red faces and their pigtails wound round and round with tarred twine were making the most of the huge platters of beef before them.

"Oy, here's a blasted gentleman, Joe," cried one of the diners as he caught sight of the Doctor.

"All right, all right," answered Joe. "There's no call to blow gravy over me if there is."

"Sally, here's a gentleman come to try your beef; you're made for life, my lass," shouted the first speaker.

Mary, very hot and with a stained apron on, pushed back a wisp of hair with the back of her hand and smiled at the Doctor.

"Would you like to try our beef, sir?" she asked.

"Certainly, but not too much if you please," replied the Doctor, and without ceremony sat himself down next to a longshoreman.

The longshoreman with his mouth very full emitted a noise which sounded like "Bloff bloff."

"I beg your pardon," said the Doctor politely.

"Fine stuff, sir," remarked the man after swallowing hard.

"I see you are enjoying it," replied the Doctor.

"Enjoy! Ah, sir, a man can enjoy anything if he's hungry enough," said the man. "When I was in the *Snowflake*, brig, and we run out of provisions I even enjoyed eating my boots boiled with a seasoning of gunpowder."

"When I was shipwrecked in the South Seas," said another, "the only thing we had to eat was sand and seaweed with an occasional oyster shell ground up fine and fried in tallow. Full of pearls those oysters was, but it wasn't no good our thinking we were going to get rich. In the end we had to eat the pearls too. I swallowed over a hundredweight myself."

"You're a couple of bloody liars," growled a mahogany coloured man. "Neither one of you has ever been out of soundings in your lives. Now when I was in the *You-ree-Dice*, frigate, we was

cast away on a West Indian cay and had to live on crocodiles and sea urchins."

At this point a smoking plate of beef and carrots was slapped down in front of the Doctor, who attacked it with as much gusto as the others did theirs.

"I am the Surgeon of the *Clapham*, East Indiaman," he said when he had finished. "When I was washed overboard off the Cape I swam to an iceberg and lived on polar bears for a year. Unable to kindle a fire I roasted the meat by converting a sheet of ice into a burning glass and focussing the rays of the sun. If I only wanted it just warmed I focussed the rays of the moon."

A roar of laughter greeted this sally.

"And how did you kill the bears, sir?" asked his neighbour.

"I prescribed for them and dosed them out of my pocket medicine chest," answered the Doctor.

After this the Doctor was voted a wag and feeling towards him grew friendly. Seeing he had gained an advantage he immediately asked whether there was any likelihood of his being able to practise in Deal.

"There's a lot of Doctors here now," said one of the diners. "But there's always room for another. People have got to go on dying."

"Is there any elderly doctor who would think of retiring?" asked Hill.

"Yes, there's old Fripp, he's nigh on eighty if he's a day."

After ascertaining all the details of Dr. Fripp's

pedigree, personal habits, patients and taste in spirits, Hill thought it might be worth while following the matter up.

After heartily wiping their mouths the diners departed one by one, pausing at the door to exchange a few pleasantries with Mary. When the last one had gone the Doctor rose and went to Mary.

"If I set up as a doctor here will you marry me?" he asked. "You see I can make myself agreeable to possible patients. It will mean that your son will be a gentleman."

"I'll think it over," said Mary thoughtfully.

"It would be the best possible thing for the boy," urged Hill. "It will give him a position in the world. I will give him education, and set him up in any learned profession he cares to adopt."

Mary looked at her hands, which were bespattered with grease, and then at Hill, and smiled again.

"I'd like to do my best for Johnny," she remarked, and then burst out laughing. "You've got such a funny nose."

"It's my most treasured possession," said the Doctor gravely. "Future Hills will have the same nose and so bring gladness and joy to the world."

"Well, I'll think it over," said Mary once again. "I won't say no."

CHAPTER XX

IT was no easy task to get a large sailing ship up the Thames when the wind was light and unsteady. Captain Hayward left the *Clapham* at Gravesend and hastened home, his work done, so that it fell to John to take the vessel up to Blackwall. Most of the way the ship drifted sideways on the tide with her main yard aback, filling or backing as the pilot directed to avoid the shoals or turn a bend. These intricate manœuvres were complicated by the fact that a crowd of other ships were doing the same thing, and no two vessels drifted or moved under sail at the same rate. By the time he let go his anchor off the Blackwall yard John was hoarse with shouting orders and thoroughly out of temper.

While the crew were aloft giving the topsails a harbour furl John was busy with Customs officials and the Honourable Company's clerks and officers. All the petty formalities drove him to silent fury. He wanted to get ashore, but knew it would be hours before he could. When, however, he was informed that he could not dock for a day or two his annoyance decreased. There was no need for him to be on board while the powder and ammunition were being unloaded, nor was his presence necessary while the ship waited in the stream.

He might be able to get ashore as soon as he was finished with these papers and endless questions.

"That will do, I think, Mr. Adams," said the senior official at last as he thrust a bundle of papers under his arm.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said John and with the most perfunctory of nods hastened on deck.

"Pipe all hands to splice the main brace," he ordered the boatswain.

Their work done the men gathered round the tubs for their last tot of rum, and with shouts and laughter drank to each other's health. Already bumboats and peddlars were alongside, and soon the decks were swarming with people from the shore. Saucy wenches hailed sailors they had never seen before as long lost lovers and then, pulling flasks of spirits from their pockets invited them to drink. New hats, coats, shoes and every item of nautical finery were offered to the returned wanderers, and sales were expedited by free offers of drink. Since they no longer belonged to the ship the men had no hesitation in telling officers with the fullest detail exactly what they thought of them and speculated on their parentage. All were burning to set foot ashore, and soon their bags were being tumbled into waiting boats, while they followed, generally under the charge of some fair charmer or boarding-house tout who would fleece them of their eighteen months' accumulated pay in a week or so.

While the uproar was still at its height John was approached by a Semitic gentleman who carried an empty sack.

" You won't be wanting that old uniform any more, Mithter Adamth," said the gentleman insinuatingly. " Your good father, thir, hath a lovely ship ready for you to command. I'll tell you what I'll do, Mithter Adamth, I'll buy all your old uniformth for cash."

" What ! Am I to go home naked ? " asked John grinning.

" I thell you a fine thilk thuit," replied the business man quickly. " A thuit made for a duke, Mithter Adamth, which I can only bring myself to part with becauth ith for you, Mr. Adamth. I will make a thacrifith, Mr. Adamth."

" I don't want a silk suit," answered John. " And I may need this uniform for a long time yet."

" No, no," cried the business man. " You are captain now of a fine ship being built."

He made the gesture of a man learning to swim and then pointed to the shipyard beside the docks, where amid a mass of scaffolding the frames of a new ship arose.

John's eyes lit up at the sight.

" The old man is keeping his word at all events," he thought, then asked the Jew what he would give for his old clothes.

The Jew first named a very modest sum, which John contemptuously refused and asked double. Soon they were bargaining away merrily, the Jew

swearing that he had a wife and fourteen children who would be reduced to beggary unless John modified his harsh demands. Finally a bargain was struck and the two repaired to John's cabin.

While John was changing into a somewhat creased brown cloth suit and the Jew was cramming his uniforms into his sack there was a knock at the door and Budge put his head in.

"Will you be wanting me any more, sir?"

"No, Budge, the only thing you have to do now is to draw your pay."

"Well, sir, as we're parting, sir, if it's customary, sir," stammered Budge, "I might make so bold as to say, sir, I've given satisfaction I hope."

"Yes, if you ever want a reference I'll give you one," answered John carelessly.

"I shan't have any money to go on land with, sir," murmured Budge.

The Jew dropped the bag of clothes only half full and approached Budge with a brotherly smile on his face.

"You want money, eh?" he asked in the friendliest fashion. "I can make a thmall advanth on your pay ticket. Only ten perthent a week to any friend of Mithter Adamth. Or I dithcount the ticket now for a very thmall commission."

Budge eyed him with disgust and looked sullenly at John, who had now dressed and was transferring his belongings into his pocket from a shelf.

"I'd like to drink your health, sir," mumbled Budge.

"Very well, go and do it," advised John, "but you'll find drink and wenches dear ashore to-night with a convoy of Indiamen in and six hundred tars out for fun."

"You want a nith cheap barrel of thpirith?" asked the business man.

"Isn't it usual, sir, to make a little present at times like this?" asked Budge querulously.

"No it isn't, not aboard one of the Honourable Company's ships," answered John. "You've earned your pay for doing your duty, and I've earned mine for doing mine. I see no reason why I should give you anything any more than I should personally reward the boatswain or the carpenter."

"You like a nith thuit?" asked the business man, but with a grumbling mutter Budge had gone.

"Very good polithy, Mithter Adamth," commented the dealer. "Never give prethenth."

"This isn't a tavern," said John. "I wonder he had the effrontery to ask me." He clapped on his hat and left the cabin.

As the tide was just on the turn John considered it would be quicker to go home by land, so taking a boat he had himself and his small valise set ashore near the docks, where he gave a boy twopence to go and fetch a coach. Then, unable to restrain his curiosity, he wandered over to the shipbuilding yard to inspect his new command. Amid the shavings and piles of

timber he stood gazing at the great curved timbers which rose from the massive keel. Shipwrights with their adzes were faithfully fairing the clean oak, while in the saw-pits other ribs and beams were being fashioned. Nearby another ship was almost planked, and there was a deafening noise of hammering. While he stood smiling at the wooden skeleton the boy returned to say there was a coach at the gate.

"My ship," murmured John, then turned away and gave the boy another sixpence.

During the drive into London John could think of nothing but the ship. She looked as though she would be smaller than the *Clapham*, and therefore only be used for the Bombay and Bengal trades. So much the better, as he disliked China, and there were greater opportunities of making a private fortune on the India run. He began to think of possible officers to serve under him, and mentally reviewed all with whom he had sailed. He was so lost in his own thoughts that he did not realise that he had given the coachman his father's address, and was surprised when the vehicle finally pulled up before the shop and an officious apprentice flung open the door.

"Is Mr. Adams senior in?" asked John, pulling himself together.

"Yes, sir."

"Kindly inform him that Captain Adams has returned home," said John proudly, "and tell the driver to go to Guildford Street."

The apprentice bowed and slammed the door,

then the coach jogged on. John put aside all professional thoughts and began to wonder how he ought to greet his wife. He knew that some sort of a present was expected of him, and had in his bag a small figure of a mandarin which nodded its head when touched. It was one of a consignment of three gross which he had shipped as part of his private trade. He had also a small canister of special tea and a shawl. After a moment's consideration he came to the conclusion that he would make a good impression if he came into the house actually carrying the gifts. Accordingly he opened his bag and took them out, then sat for the remainder of the journey carefully nursing them on his lap. At last the coach reached his house and the coachman got down from his box to ring the bell. Guarding his presents very carefully John opened the door and descended gingerly to the pavement. He had his fare ready in his hand. While the coachman was getting the bag out of the vehicle John gave the bell another pull and waited impatiently stamping his feet. At last the front door opened and an extremely ugly maid-servant confronted John.

"Take these," he ordered, thrusting his presents into the astonished maid's arms.
"Where's your mistress?"

"In the parlour, sir. What name?"

"Take my bag upstairs," said John, ignoring her question. "And give me those things back. I'll carry them myself."

John seized his presents and bounded up the

stairs to the little parlour. Georgina was writing at a small desk set on the polished table in the middle of the room. On hearing the door flung open she looked up and gave a loud scream.

“ My husband ! ”

“ I’ve brought you a few little things from China, my dear,” said John quietly, as he deposited his presents on the table.

Georgina rose quickly with her hands outstretched. John noticed at once there had been a change in the fashions since he left. Gone were all stays and padding of the figure, and a light sack-like dress was caught in with a sash almost under the arm-pits, while the low neck revealed most of the lady’s bust. He approved of the mode and catching his wife in his arms kissed her warmly.

“ We heard you had arrived in the Downs yesterday,” said Georgina at last. “ Your brother said it would be days before you would arrive.”

“ We came up the river by this morning’s tide,” answered John. “ But never mind that, I’m home, and I hear father is building a ship for me.”

“ Oh ! John ! I have a surprise,” murmured Georgina coyly, and buried her face in his waistcoat.

“ Indeed ? ”

“ A sweet little surprise,” breathed Georgina.

“ What is it ? ” asked John uneasily.

“ Guess,” cooed Georgina, twisting off a waistcoat button.

"A legacy?" hazarded John.

"In a sense," answered Georgina.

"In what sense?"

"My dearest husband, a son and heir," cried Georgina.

"Good God! Another?" ejaculated John.

"Another," echoed Georgina, puzzled.

"I mean another Adams," explained John quickly. "I am glad to see the stock is so prolific."

"Come and see our little Johnny," urged Georgina.

"Yes, yes, of course," answered John.

Georgina took him by the hand and led him to a spare bedroom which had been turned into a nursery. Here, under the eye of an aged nurse pitted with smallpox a baby was crawling painfully over the carpet.

"Here is the master," said Georgina to the nurse with a wave of the hand towards John.

The old woman curtsied and grinned waggishly at him.

"Oh! He's such a fine boy, sir, a son to be proud of," she exclaimed, and darted forward to collar the infant.

"He shows more signs of life than some I have seen," admitted John when the child, howling loudly, was given to him for inspection.

"So well behaved, sir," simpered the nurse, as the child struck its father a hearty blow on the nose and yelled even louder.

"He looks strong," remarked John.

"And born so easy, sir, without giving his poor mother too much trouble," continued the nurse.

"Jenny!" cried Georgina sharply.

"I dare say he'll live to command an Indian-man, too," remarked John, as he set the child back on the floor. "It's comforting to know we have interest enough to ensure him a safe career."

"Perhaps, my dear, you will leave him in the position of a private gentleman," said Georgina.

"That remains to be seen," replied John. "Meanwhile I dare say he's happy enough with his nurse and doesn't need us."

He opened the door and motioned Georgina to leave the room. She did so at once, blowing a kiss to the child as she went, and they returned to the parlour. Once again John indicated his gifts and sat himself down in the only comfortable chair while Georgina unpacked them and professed herself enraptured.

"I'm glad you like them," said John.

"They are charming and prove that I was in your thoughts even when you were thousands of miles away," answered Georgina as she draped herself in the shawl and admired her reflection in a mirror over the mantelpiece.

"I never forgot you," said John gravely.

"I am so glad you are back. Now I shall have a protector," remarked Georgina, still admiring herself in the glass. "Your father and brother have done nothing but interfere with my

affairs since the moment you left. First, I was spending too much, then they found fault with my doctor, then they tried to prevail upon me to use my influence with father over some tiresome document or other."

"Father and I understand one another, so there will be no more need for quarrelling," said John. "Since there is an addition to the family we shall have to watch the money carefully. However, father's advice is always sound on that score. I'll go and see him later and learn how things stand."

Georgina turned and faced him.

"John, I am not at all sure that I approve of your father's conduct of business. My dear father says it is distressing to watch the way in which your family crush opposition and override any genteel impulse which will tend to reduce their profits."

"We can only judge by results," replied John. "And I think you will admit the results are pleasing. I shall benefit to the tune of some thousands when he dies, and if he had not come to your father's rescue you would have been nearly bankrupt. Heaven knows we have to do all kinds of strange things in order to acquire wealth."

"They ought not to have been so coarse in their manner when they forbade me to engage a manservant, although my position demands one," grumbled Georgina. "The lack of breeding they showed was most distressing to a lady of delicate nurture."

"Well, when all is said and done father is only a grocer and I'm only a sailor," replied John. "You must make allowances."

"Oh! But *gentlemen* enter the Company's Maritime Service," protested Georgina with a smile. "You are far above common retail trade."

"Perhaps, but I'd like to handle some of the profits made by retailing all the same," said John. "I owe my position, marriage and everything else to it."

"Of course, I could not object to anything which gave me you, my dearest husband," simpered Georgina. "Dear Johnny will live to forget any humble origins."

"Three score years and ten will take him up to the year eighteen sixty-five, think of that," remarked John. "But the Company will last longer than he does. He'll always be safe so long as he has an interest in the Company."

There was a discreet knock at the door and a servant came in carrying a note, which she timidly presented to John.

"Father wishes us to dine with him and discuss affairs," announced John after scanning the note.

"I have no wish to dine with him," said Georgina with a sniff. "His manners are not nice."

"I ought to, though," replied John. "He's building a ship for me and will be my employer as well as my father."

"Very well, if you think your profession comes before your wife's feelings on your first day at home," said Georgina tartly.

"A man's profession always comes first," remarked John unconcernedly.

CHAPTER XXI

OLD ADAMS stretched for the port and replenished his glass.

"Here's to a glorious future, John my son," he said, swallowing the wine. He smacked his mouth and smiled round the dingy dining-room.

"Glorious tipple, my boy, is port."

John, who was alone with his father, agreed.

"Yes, my boy, I think there are great prospects," continued old Adams. "This war is sending up prices. I always said it would. Now we are building this ship you are secure. A fine ship she'll be, my boy, everything of the best."

"I saw her in frame and thought she was being put together with fine materials," said John.

"Now that I'm a grandfather we must look to the future. Your brother Henry is slow in finding a wife on account of his many interests. But when he gets this bank of his going he will settle down. Banking is all very well these days, but in times of peace I have my doubts. There are no big government contractors to borrow then."

"When do you think this ship will be launched?" asked John.

"Not for months," answered his father. "She has to be planked, sheathed, and her decks laid. You can amuse yourself by being a gentleman of leisure for the present. You'll never

believe the trouble I've had with that fool Tibbles in getting her laid down. However, we've pushed him out now and he no longer has any say in matters. It's cost money, but it was worth it. He has no idea of business, no idea at all."

"Yes, I understood from my wife there had been some disagreements," admitted John.

"Your wife," said old Adams with distaste "Oh yes, there have been disagreements, my boy, but now you are home you can keep her in order yourself. I have no intention of meddling with your private affairs. But I warn you she is extravagant, and thinks the daughter of an India ship's husband is as good as a royal personage."

"You can't expect a woman who was luxuriously brought up to realise the importance of money all at once," replied John in extenuation.

"True," growled his father. "Any child of Tibbles's is bound to be a spendthrift. However, you know there are twenty shillings in a pound, and can be relied upon to be prudent."

"What is your opinion of the war?" asked John, to change the subject.

"I think it's shaping well enough," replied his father. "Now we've beaten the French fleet they will send out more and more privateers, but they will not be able to stop us taking all their colonies. It's a good thing that expedition to the Low Countries was a failure. We shall now be able to spare all our troops for capturing the West Indian Islands, and so get complete control of

the rum and sugar. That will be a fine thing, a rum and sugar monopoly. Worth any amount of wars. Sugar is bound to go up, so's tea."

"I must be going home," remarked John, looking at his watch.

"Yes, my boy, do you go," said his father. "Come and see me again soon about your private trade. If you should visit Tibbles tell me how you think he is. He was not very well when last I saw him. If he intends to become an invalid he will be no more worry to us."

John rose to go and after bidding his father good night went to the parlour, where his mother was sewing by the light of a single candle. She looked up when her son came into the small circle of light.

"So you're a father too now, John," she mumbled.

"Yes, mother, he seems a healthy enough child."

"See you have more," counselled his mother. "That wife of yours will be a sore trouble to you if she's allowed to be idle and play the fine lady. She thinks we are beneath her, John my boy, although we've saved Tibbles from ruin, as I told her."

"I must be going home," murmured John.

"See you are master in that house," continued the old woman. "Your father is master here, and a fine life he leads me, but I respect him for it all the same."

"No doubt we shall jog along comfortably enough," said John.

"It will be your own fault if you're not comfortable," remarked his mother.

John said good night and wandered out into Holborn, where a few scattered lamps feebly illuminated the muddy street. After what seemed an endless walk through alleys and dead streets he at last arrived at his own home, and was let in by the servant.

"Where's your mistress?" asked John.

"She is retiring, sir."

John nodded and went into the dining-room, where he found a decanter of rather poor sherry and poured himself out a glass. Then, with candle in hand, he walked solemnly round the room examining the furniture and the prints on the walls. He had not been at home long enough after his marriage to get familiar with it. When he finished his tour and set his empty glass down on the sideboard he came to the conclusion that he had a very snug berth. He went slowly up to bed.

The next morning Georgina in a satin dressing-gown and a lace cap served him with tea in the same dining-room, which seemed bright and comfortable in the sunlight.

"Now you are a Captain, my dear," said Georgina, sipping her tea, "we ought to look for a larger house in a better neighbourhood."

"When I have made one voyage and drawn my pay and profits I might consider the question," replied John. "But at the moment we have a son to consider, and more prospects than cash. I don't think we can be any better off than we are here."

"Love in a cottage is very sweet, no doubt," smiled Georgina. "But there is position to be considered."

"My position is on the quarter-deck," answered John. "It matters to no one where I live ashore. Why, Briggs, who used to command the *Fort William*, used to live in a lodging house in Wapping. He may still be there for all I know. An expensive house will not help me in the least in my profession."

"But it is due to you," protested Georgina. "Remember you rank with a post-captain in the Navy."

"I may do socially, but I know very well what would happen if I tried to presume on the rank at sea," replied John. "Since I shall be away most of the time it would be wanton waste to have a large house."

"I should be happier somewhere else," sighed Georgina. "Of course, if my happiness is nothing to you"

"Our happiness must come second. The first consideration is amassing sufficient wealth for our child," countered John. "I may be drowned or die of fever or get killed"

"No, no," cried Georgina, and produced her handkerchief.

"Such eventualities must be prepared for," persisted John. "Also we might have more children later."

Georgina put away her handkerchief and favoured her husband with a coy smile.

"It is my duty to ensure that our financial

position is absolutely sound," added John. "I must beg you not to discuss it, but leave it entirely in my hands."

"Very well, my dear," said Georgina, who realised she was beaten but hoped to win in time.

"If I think another house necessary I promise I will consult you," conceded John.

"We must call on dear father to-day," remarked Georgina, after a short silence. "He has not been at all well of late. I am afraid your relatives vexed and distressed him."

"Very well, my dear," said John.

Since his wife had commented adversely on his suit John went out to a tailor directly after breakfast and ordered clothes of the latest cut. He then returned home to escort Georgina to her father's. Although the day was fine and the distance short, Georgina at first wished to order a hackney coach, but on meeting with resistance attempted to compromise with a sedan chair. But it was of no avail, John insisted on walking, swearing that he had not used his legs for months and wanted to get the stiffness out of the joints.

Walk they accordingly did, although in her heart Georgina knew that the butler would despise her when he saw them on the paternal doorstep with no vehicle behind them. Whatever the butler thought, his face did not betray him when he opened the door, and with a superior smile bowed a welcome to John.

"Is your master in his study?" asked Georgina.

"Yes, madam. He is feeling a trifle low this morning, madam."

"Kindly announce us."

The butler walked gravely to the study door and knocked. A few moments later John found himself in the presence of his father-in-law. During the time he had been away Mr. Tibbles had aged and looked ill. Clad in his old dressing-gown and nightcap, he seemed to be but a shadow of the magnificent shipowner who had patronized John in the coffee house at their first meeting. Mr. Tibbles held out a languid hand, which felt cold and flaccid when John took it.

"So, John, you are back. I am glad," said Mr. Tibbles.

"I am sorry to find you ill, sir," replied John sincerely.

"I have a slight uneasiness, little pain, you understand, but an uneasiness," murmured Mr. Tibbles. "I am sorry to have to say that, although unwell, I have been subjected to various petty annoyances and slights which my enfeebled condition does not enable me to bear with proper equanimity."

"I hope the physicians will soon cure you," said John politely.

"I have every confidence in my medical adviser," was the answer. "He has performed the necessary phlebotomy and administered the correct specifics. But, John, who can remedy a wounded heart?"

"Tell John all your troubles, father. I know

he will sympathise and may be able to help," urged Georgina.

"I regret to say I have had serious disagreements with your father and brother," began Mr. Tibbles. "They have treated me as though I were totally ignorant of the very rudiments of business, and not hesitated to be offensive when their plans clashed with mine. At last, disgusted with their lack of manners and consideration, I practically retired from active participation in our interests. My father was in the Maritime Interest, and I have spent the greater part of my life loyally supplying the Company with ships. It is, therefore, scarcely to be wondered at that I resent vulgar interference from men who only entered the Interest through my good graces. All the more was I grieved when I found that their sole ambition was to make a vast profit by any means whatsoever. They have estranged me from the most genteel and respectable business houses for no better reason than that they thought such houses insufficiently ruthless in their methods. In my opinion the whole of their conduct has been ungentlemanly. I am afraid that the French Revolution is at the back of the whole thing."

"I am sorry to hear there have been disagreements," said John. "But tell me, have your profits increased or decreased since my father joined forces with you?"

"As a matter of fact they have increased somewhat," answered Mr. Tibbles with an uneasy cough. "But profits on the whole are not

the whole end of affairs. There are genteel and ungenteel ways of conducting business, and I prefer the genteel."

"So it's more a quarrel over manners than money," concluded John.

"Precisely," answered Mr. Tibbles. "I refuse to associate myself with blustering money grabbing."

"I think you have acted wisely," opined John. "By stepping aside you have enabled father to get his way, and have made a good income for yourself without having to adopt methods you dislike. Why not leave things as they are, and spend the rest of your days as a private gentleman who has sold his interest to another?"

"That is precisely what I intend to do," said Mr. Tibbles. "I am glad you concur with me. It is the only dignified course."

"I knew John would be able to help you," exclaimed Georgina.

After a few minutes of desultory conversation Mr. Tibbles grew pale and said he was not strong enough to continue the audience. Georgina at once commiserated with him and offered to remain in the house in case he should need any help. But with a gracious wave of the hand her father dismissed her.

Out in the square John looked at the outside of the house and burst into laughter.

"John!" exclaimed Georgina in a shocked voice. "Surely father is not a subject for merriment."

"I wasn't laughing at him," explained John.

"I was thinking how I stood here one night looking up at your window."

"How romantic!" breathed Georgina.

"I remember swearing when I saw you wouldn't let me in," continued John. "It was a pity you didn't, for stolen fruits are always the sweetest, and we were going to be married in any case."

"It would have been most improper if I had," remarked Georgina primly.

"On the contrary, it would have made you far more eager to marry me than you were," countered John. "I had to bully you into coming to church."

"Oh, but my maiden modesty," cried Georgina.

"Well, all that's over and done with now," said John, then, turning his thoughts to other matters, asked, "Where's your sister, Amelia?"

"She is staying with relatives in the country," answered Georgina. "In strict confidence I may tell you that father sent her there because she became quite intolerable. Would you believe it, but she actually reproached poor father for the fact that you fell in love with me and not with her?"

"Indeed?"

"Yes, and if you remember she spread dreadful scandals about you out of pure jealousy, and when I knew that our darling would be born she dared to express the hope that he would not take after his father."

During the whole of the stroll back to Guildford Street Georgina enlarged on the vindictiveness of her sister and the agonies her father had suffered.

During the days which followed John enjoyed himself doing nothing and having his wife as a constant companion. He soon accepted her as a matter of course and was much gratified to find that she would listen for hours to his comments on Asia, his opinion of the Honourable Company, and his views on politics. Although she showed a tendency to be extravagant he was secretly flattered when she said that lavish expenditure was the prerogative of a Captain. By carefully checking expenditure he managed to live well and satisfy his wife that he was maintaining his position.

In due course the time arrived when he had to attend the office of Mr. Puddock to draw his pay for the preceding voyage. He strolled down to Leadenhall Street at his leisure, with no intention of pocketing the usual pile of gold but of instructing the clerks to transfer his balance to Messrs. Adams and Son, who had kindly consented to act as his bankers. When, however, he came face to face with his former messmates his lofty demeanour abruptly vanished, and he hailed them cheerfully. Each mate was accompanied by some friend, who generally turned out to be a creditor or relation.

"Do I hear you've got a command, Adams?" asked Dickson.

"Yes, a ship now building."

"Lucky dog," remarked Dickson. "It'll be years before I get one."

The clerks at the desks round the room were busy shovelling out gold and silver to the throng of officers and petty officers and calling out names. While John was receiving congratulations on all sides he felt a tug at his arm and turned to find himself face to face with Doctor Hill.

"So you are to be a commander?" said the Doctor grinning. "Well, my boy, I'm going to be a commander too, a lord and master. I've got married."

"A very good thing," replied John. "It's pleasant to come home to a comfortable house and find that a wife has your dinner all ready for you. I find it suits me very well and spares me all the trouble and expense I used to go to when wanted a wench. By the way, I have a son."

"I know that," replied the Doctor tartly. "I was in the shop when you were first shown him."

"No, I mean a son by my wife," corrected John. "Now that you have reminded me, though, I must go down to Deal some day and see the other one is properly cared for."

"The other one is perfectly cared for, and there is no need whatever for you to set foot in Deal," growled the Doctor. "I am caring for him, and nightly I pray to God that he will never resemble his father."

"What are you doing with the boy?" demanded John.

"I am his stepfather, his mother has done me

the honour of marrying me," answered the Doctor proudly.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed John. "Whatever brought her to that? I could have given her money enough if she was destitute."

"She was not destitute," snapped the Doctor. "And by marrying showed sound good sense. In order to win her I had to take your damned bastard to my bosom and bribe her partner in business. Now she has a home and position."

"Well, there's something to be said for position," remarked John. "Although it is a word I am beginning to get tired of, but she's not yet twenty, and you must be over fifty, and do not resemble a Greek god in face or figure. Did she marry you for your position only?"

"No," replied the Doctor coldly. "She married out of affection and esteem."

"Well I'm damned," murmured John.

A moment later his name was called and he went to the desk to arrange about his pay. When he had done the Doctor was nowhere to be seen.

On the way home he could think of nothing but Mary, and wonder why she ever married a man whose character she had ample opportunity to study during her confinement in Newgate. There was no doubt that Hill had done most of the work in saving her life, and she was probably showing her gratitude. Also a servant girl would be sure to have hankerings after a parlour and servants of her own as well as a wish to better herself socially. By the time he got home John decided

that Mary had acted wisely, and he was glad he had no further responsibilities towards her.

Scarcely had John set foot in his own hall when he was accosted by the maid, who was in an obvious state of extreme distress.

"Oh, sir, the mistress, sir, said would you go to Mr. Tibbles at once."

"What is the matter?" asked John.

"Oh, sir," wailed the maid. "The poor gentleman is dying of a great pain in the guts."

CHAPTER XXII

THE funeral was over, and the soberly-clad mourners decorously returned to the house to hear the will read. Over the massive front door hung a hatchment with the Tibbles arms ; a ship under topsails, jib and mizzen, passing a minaret between two palm trees, all proper. Crest, a demi-Hindoo, proper, holding a Book of Common Prayer displayed proper. Something of the chill of a family vault pervaded the stone hall when the butler opened the door and admitted the lawyer and his clerk. The family were gathered in the drawing room upstairs sipping sherry and talking in low voices about the weather. As the foot-steps of the lawyer were heard approaching there was a general uneasiness. Old Adams fidgeted on a tiny chair which seemed likely to collapse any moment under his vast weight. On a settee near the window Amelia Tibbles was snivelling loudly.

A little round table was set before the lawyer, and his clerk, having spread out the papers, withdrew. John and Amelia looked at each other inquiringly. How would they fare ? With much coughing the lawyer started reading the unintelligible legal phraseology of the will in a monotonous voice which buzzed on and on with an occasional staccato cough in the silence of the

room. At last he stopped, and old Adams heaved a great sigh of relief.

"Well, he kept his word at all events, and made Georgina sole heir," he remarked.

"It's monstrous!" cried Amelia hysterically. "I, the eldest daughter, am left with nothing, nothing. It is monstrous."

"As a maiden lady the legacy of fifty pounds per annum ought to keep you," said old Adams. "Your expenses cannot be very heavy."

"Am I to be driven from this house?" demanded Amelia.

"Of course," answered old Adams. "The house goes to my son John through his wife, and then to his heirs."

Amelia rose to her feet quivering.

"It's a conspiracy. I see it is a conspiracy. You said just now he had kept his word and made Georgina sole heir. That proves it is a conspiracy to rob me of my right," she screamed. "Deny it if you dare."

"My dear Miss Tibbles . . ." murmured the lawyer soothingly.

"As an executor, miss, I cannot see that you have any rights other than those contained in the will," said old Adams truculently. "In my opinion no woman ought to be allowed any property whatsoever, much less fifty pounds a year to play ducks and drakes with on frills and baubles."

"You are the conspirator!" exclaimed Amelia, stabbing an accusing finger in the direction of old Adams.

"Rubbish, woman," replied that worthy. "I took the obvious course of assuring myself that your sister would be properly provided for before I gave my consent to the match with my son."

"Ha! A marriage of convenience. I knew it. Who indeed would marry dear Georgina if there were no money attached?"

Georgina sprang to her feet.

"And who indeed would marry you even with money attached?" demanded Georgina of her sister. "I am glad I have given my dear husband a worthy house, where we may bring up our child in correct surroundings."

"No doubt there will be a perfect troop of little grocers profaning the ancestral home of the Tibbles family before long," answered Amelia. "If that is to be the case I am glad, yes, glad that I shall not be present to witness the degradation."

She paused, and after uttering one or two inarticulate sounds, suddenly rushed out of the room. Old Adams sniffed as the door banged, and then looked at John.

"You have inherited a valuable house, my boy, but not such a great deal of money with it, so don't be extravagant or try to play the nabob. You will have a large interest in your new ship, but you had better leave all business matters to me and content yourself with commanding her."

He struggled to his feet and ambled round the room appraising the furniture and ornaments, while John and Georgina served the lawyer with a glass of sherry and received his compliments on their inheritance.

"It all ~~seems~~ elegant enough," remarked old Adams from the end of the room. "Not the sort of house I should choose, though. Since I am an executor I suppose I had better look through all the papers and documents in the study downstairs."

"Perhaps you would like my assistance, sir," said the lawyer.

"I should be very grateful for it, sir," replied old Adams. "I dare say some of his affairs were badly involved."

"Ah!" sighed the lawyer. "The unfortunate gentleman made many errors, but who of us has not?"

"I have not," answered old Adams, and trundled out of the room with the lawyer following in his wake.

John and Georgina being left alone exchanged glances of mutual satisfaction.

"We must move in here at once," decided Georgina.

"Very well," answered John. "No doubt we shall be able to let our present house. I'll ask father about it."

So in a few days John found himself installed in the tree-lined square with a butler and a footman to wait upon him and a coach in which to drive abroad. News of his good fortune having spread abroad in the usual mysterious manner, he soon began to receive numbers of callers. The first was Captain Hayward, who appeared in full-dress uniform and invited himself to dinner, where he made a great and lasting impression on the

two Misses Bodger, daughters of an underwriter, whom Georgina had known since childhood. When the ladies had withdrawn and John was alone with his former commander, Hayward took the opportunity of asking the exact fortune Mr. Bodger was expected to leave, whether he had any sons, and if John thought a match with one of the daughters would be sound policy.

One morning when John was in the dreary study doing his best to master the intricacies of ship-owning and naval architecture the footman entered with a superior smirk and announced there was a person who wished to pay his respects.

"What sort of person?" asked John, looking up from a long list of trading profits.

"A person in somewhat reduced circumstances, sir, I should imagine," answered the servant.

"Show him in," ordered John wearily.

A few moments later John was looking with some distaste at his former servant, Budge, who in torn and stained clothes stood twisting his hat between his fingers.

"Well?" said John with a lift of the eyebrows.

"I was wondering whether you could help me, sir," muttered Budge. "I'm penniless."

"Yes, I dare say I could find you a berth," answered John. "There are five Indiamen fitting out at the moment, and owing to the activities of the press gangs men are rather scarce. If you come back to-morrow I can give you a letter to a friend who will be able to sign you on."

"I don't wish to go to sea, sir," said Budge in a low voice.

"That is the only sort of employment I can offer you," replied John. "I have few interests ashore."

"I should like a post in this establishment, sir," murmured Budge.

"I am afraid you will not get one. I have all the servants I require."

"Your secrets would be safe, sir, if you employed me," said Budge, with an insinuating smile. "I'm sure Mrs. Adams would be very distressed, sir, if she learnt that you had kept a woman in Newgate after your marriage and that you hired a Chinese whore at Whampoa."

"Not nearly so distressed as you will be if you don't leave this room at once," cried John.

"Very well, sir," snarled Budge, as he sidled towards the door. "But don't say I didn't give you a chance."

He escaped before John could catch him, and his hurrying footsteps could be heard crossing the hall. John rang the bell and returned to his desk, where the piles of his late father-in-law's papers still awaited his attention.

"In no circumstances is that person to be allowed in this house," he ordered the footman.

He spent the rest of the day mastering details of shipbuilding costs and charter parties.

For a few weeks John enjoyed his life, and especially appreciated the fact that he had a room to himself, where he could retire and find out exactly what a shipowner could make from the

labours of shipwrights and seamen. He frequently ordered his coach and drove down to Blackwall, where he would spend hours wandering about the shipyards, kicking great baulks of oak, and watch with breathless attention a man driving in a treenail. All treated him with the greatest deference, as was proper to a Commander in the Honourable Company's Maritime Service who kept his carriage and was known to have relatives amongst the wealthiest in the land. As time went on life at home began to bore him, and he spent more and more time at Blackwall.

Soon his ship lost the appearance of a gaunt skeleton of grey wood. Freshly-sawn planks of sweet smelling oak swept in graceful curves along her sides. About the bow and stern carved wreaths and figures began to appear, while in a workshop near by an old man with no other tools than adzes started fashioning a tree-trunk into the graceful figure of a woman. In the forge blacksmiths with ringing blows were beating the red-hot iron into chainplates, ringbolts and other fittings. Day after day John watched the hundreds of thousands of bolts and nails disappear into bare wood and saw the gaping cavity of the hull gradually decked in.

When he drove home for dinner with shavings sticking to his clothes and sawdust in his shoes he pictured his ship already afloat with sails bent waiting a fair wind in the Downs. Having possessed himself of the model from which she was being built he went to a painter and commissioned a portrait of the vessel, explaining how he

intended to have her rigged and what colours he would use on her hull. The painter, after examining the model and making careful notes of the details, promised to execute the work with the greatest despatch.

Georgina did not entirely approve of her husband's preoccupation with his profession, and although she was busy receiving and returning visits felt that she would prefer an occasional day at home with John. On the rare occasions when John was at home he shut himself up in his study and was too busy to give her any attention.

One evening when they had gone to bed she expressed her doubt as to whether it was quite proper for a captain to mix himself so much in the mechanical work of shipbuilding. Gentlemen generally left these minor details to the proper artisans and contented themselves with commanding. The late Mr. Tibbles only did such work as was proper to his station.

"That is as may be, my dear," answered John sleepily. "But my life and the life of all on board depends on the ship being staunch. Your father had Captains to assure themselves all was well. I am combined captain and part owner, so must do the work of both."

"You should depute part of the duties to a subordinate," said Georgina.

"I have none as yet," grunted John.

"You have a duty to your family as well as to the Company," argued Georgina. "It is not right that I should always have to pay my calls alone, and I know many of our friends would be

charmed to meet you. We do not want dear little Johnny to grow up without even knowing his father by sight. So, my dear, it is most important that you should find some person who can arrange these little details for you, and I am sure your father and brother would be only too pleased to take the monetary side of the enterprise completely off your hands. It is most ungenteel to leave this house like a common labourer at sunrise and only return at sunset. Remember, you rank with a post-captain in the Royal Navy, and I am sure they are above supervising mere carpenters."

A peaceful snore answered this speech.

The next morning John left for Blackwall as usual before his wife was dressed. He returned only just in time to receive a number of guests for dinner, none of whom he had ever set eyes on before. It was apparently his duty to escort an immensely fat lady in a turban and ostrich feathers to the table. He never learnt her name, and spent most of dinner casting covert glances at her ample bosom, which seemed likely at any moment to burst the low-cut dress which was stretched with difficulty over her person.

"And so you have been to China, Captain Adams," she simpered. "How strange and how magical such countries must be. I adore their porcelain and their tea. What consummate taste, coupled with what skill, they must possess. What is your opinion of China, Captain Adams?"

"An amazing country, madam, where the women wear trousers and bind up their feet in

infancy so that they will be unable to walk," answered John. "The mandarins allow their nails to grow to enormous length to show that they have never done any manual labour."

"What aristocracy!" cried the lady. "I have always held that it ill befits a gentlewoman to walk, though, of course, dancing may be permitted. I expect you long to return to China, Captain Adams, and see more of their noble customs."

"I am never sorry to get to sea, ma'am," admitted John. "And China is without doubt a magnificent country where fresh objects of interest meet the beholder at every turn."

The gentleman on John's left, who wore his own hair powdered and was middle-aged, smiled broadly.

"Ah! I have heard the Chinese women are delightful. Porcelain shepherdesses, ma'am, clothed in the rarest silks and exhaling mysterious perfumes compounded from ingredients unknown here."

John thought of the filthy sweating coolies, the *sanka* girls with the wrinkled crone in charge, and the wax-like Chinese merchants who spat incessantly on his sacred deck.

"Oh, Mr. Hambleshaw, I vow you are a sad libertine," giggled the fat lady.

"No, ma'am, but a connoisseur of beauty in every form," answered the gentleman. "That is why I enjoy so much sitting opposite yourself."

When the ladies withdrew John found himself

in the company of five total strangers, who all seemed to regard him as a sort of oracle on every question.

A bland gentleman in a magnificent flowered waistcoat with heavy gold seals hanging below drew his chair near to John's.

"And what are your views on credit, Captain Adams?" he asked.

"I hardly know," stammered John.

"Hum. As bad as that, is it?" remarked the bland gentleman thoughtfully.

"Well, no," said John. "I mean I can scarcely give an opinion on it at the moment."

"Ah! You've got your doubts too," cried an elderly gentleman in a wig. "So have I, Captain. But I dare swear your bank will soon be able to form an opinion."

"No doubt," agreed John vaguely.

"I'm willing to risk a little when you've made up your mind," the gentleman in the wig informed him in a low voice. "You know . . . a nod is as good as a wink with me."

Mr. Hambleshaw, the connoisseur of beauty, was thirsty for information.

"Now, with regard to the slave trade, Captain Adams, what do you think?"

"It seems to employ a great many ships and seamen," hazarded John.

"Ah! That's what I say," cried all the gentlemen in chorus.

"I don't know how they will manage about sugar and rum if they suppress it," continued

John, who had heard his father at length on the matter. "They will both go up and a couple of hundred ships lie idle as well."

"It is time the legislature was taken out of the hands of a few irresponsible squires and the merchants who make the country rich put in their places," opined the elderly gentleman.

"Whiggery!" snapped a small gentleman who had hitherto been silent.

"And what of it, sir?" demanded the elderly gentleman.

Without making any reply the small gentleman asked John :

"What will be the outcome of the accusations against Warren Hastings?"

"I have not had the time to give the matter much attention," confessed John.

The remainder of the company looked at the small gentleman as though he had been very properly snubbed.

"It would be better if the Honourable Company was allowed to conduct its own affairs in its own way without political interference," remarked the elderly gentleman. "I have every confidence in the Company. Gentlemen, I give you the toast of the Honourable East India Company, coupled with the name of Captain Adams, its brightest ornament."

As the port began to circulate more freely and tongues wagged louder, John became less circumspect in his answers to the questions fired at him. The questions also became unintelligible or rambling.

"Your wife told my wife all about you," confided the elderly gentleman.

"I don't believe you work all day, though, you dog. Tell me where do you go?"

"Blackwall," answered John. "I watch my ship being built. Fine ship, magnificent ship. Come to Blackwall with me and I'll show you. Oak from rail to garboard, finest copper, pierced for thirty-eight twelve-pounders, but I'm going to have carronades on quarter-deck and forecastle. Come and see. I'm prouder of my ship than anything in the world. You come and see."

"Sit all day watching a ship?" asked Mr. Hambleshaw.

"Finest ship in the world!" cried John. "I give you the toast of my ship, gentlemen."

While the toast was being drunk the elderly gentleman smiled and nodded his head like one of John's Chinese mandarins.

"You will go far, Captain Adams. Always an eye on your trade."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE launching of an East Indiaman was a great occasion. When John's new ship, resplendent in new paint and shining with gold leaf, was ready to take the water, preparations were made for an unusually magnificent ceremony. Around the bow a stand for spectators was built and covered in red cloth ornamented with coats of arms, while at the intervals along the sides and rear flag poles were placed. A large mould loft, where normally the plans of ships were drawn out full size, was cleared and decorated ready for long trestle tables which would soon be loaded with substantial food and appetising wines.

On the appointed day a huge crowd gathered in the yard, consisting of all the workmen with their families and friends. The other ships which were building were speedily utilised as grand-stands and decorated with bunting flown from the scaffolding round them. On the river a fleet of wherries hovered while the Indiamen in the stream hoisted all their flags, and one which was almost ready to sail rigged man ropes aloft so that the yards could be manned. The Honourable Company's yacht with several members of the Court of Directors anchored close inshore, where a magnificent view could be obtained, and shortly afterwards the Trinity House yacht joined her.

It was a sunny morning, with a fresh northerly wind which made the flags stream out to the best advantage.

John in his full-dress uniform drove down in state with Georgina by his side, and on nearing the gate of the dockyard became involved in a press of coaches belonging to members of the Marine Interest, Directors and other great personages. By a great stroke of luck old Adams had managed to get the Countess of Bungay to consent to perform the christening ceremony, and there was her ladyship's coach with gold and scarlet hammer cloth, flunkies in splendid liveries, and outriders. Had the ground not been so muddy it is possible that many of the merchants on foot would have fallen on their knees in humble gratitude that such an august being should consent to acknowledge the very existence of an East India Company.

John alighted at the gate, where he found his father hot and agitated awaiting him.

"Have you seen Henry?" were the old man's first words.

Before John could reply a dashing cabriolet drew up and Henry jumped down beside them. He was dressed in his most expensive suit, and followed the recent fashion by having his hair unpowdered.

With John and Georgina leading the way, the family party was ushered into the stand, where they were presented to her ladyship. A number of other ships' husbands insisted on shaking their hands and wishing the ship good fortune.

Meanwhile a brass band was playing, and from under the ship came a tap, tap, as the shores were knocked away.

"Er, what is the name, Mr. Haddon?" her ladyship asked old Adams.

"*Danaë*, my lady," he replied. "Called after a classical lady who was impregnated by a shower of gold. A pretty conceit, I think."

Her ladyship favoured him with a frigid smile and looked stupidly at the great oaken stempost before her. Suddenly the foreman gave a signal, a bottle of wine was handed to the Countess and the band stopped playing. There was a moment of silence, then her ladyship cried :

"I christen you *Danaë*," and smashed the bottle against the stem.

As she did so a few blows of a maul were heard, then the great hull quivered slightly and began to move very slowly backwards. With gathering speed the ship sped down the greased ways, while the band played "Rule Britannia" fortissimo, guns were fired, and thousands cheered themselves hoarse.

Flinging aside two sparkling plumes of water the *Danaë* plunged into the river stern first and shot out into the stream until checked by stout cables. Numerous heavy boats propelled by many oars shot alongside her to prevent her from drifting helplessly.

The Countess accepted old Adams's arm and headed a procession from the grandstand to the mould loft, where a collation was prepared. The workmen who had swarmed over the scaffolding

and frames of the ships on the stocks clambered down with their families. Soon the yard was deserted except for a small knot of men in working clothes who stood on the empty slip round the mangled body of a comrade who had been crushed as he knocked away a shore to set the ship in motion.

The mould loft, gay with flags hung round the walls, was crowded with guests. At the high table old Adams and the Countess presided over a company composed of the shipbuilders and their senior clerks, members of the Court of Directors of the Honourable East India Company, a Lord of the Admiralty, members of the Marine Interest, Members of Parliament, nabobs and a miscellaneous collection of Captains in the Company's Maritime Service, officers of the Company's Indian Army, shareholders and the like, to the number of two hundred or so. Soon lobsters were being consumed, champagne corks were popping, and a roar of conversation filled the room.

John, sitting at the high table near his father, was too dazed to pay much attention to the prattle of the lady he had taken in. He kept glancing over his shoulder at a curtain on the wall behind him.

"Don't you think so, Captain Adams?" enquired the lady beside him.

"I am sure you are right, ma'am," murmured John.

"I am so glad you agree," cried the lady. "My husband always says I am wrong."

John grinned slyly, as though to establish a bond of sympathy, and stole another look over his shoulder at the curtain.

"And I always say that it is so important that the lower orders should be kept in their places," said the lady beside him. "Only the other day I read of a servant who had tried to rob her mistress and was very properly hanged. If any of my maids proved dishonest, I would summon a constable at once, would not you, Captain Adams?"

"Immediately," agreed John.

"I think it is the worst crime possible, considering we feed and clothe the wretches and pay them wages," added the lady. "Have you ever known a servant steal anything, Captain Adams?"

"Once, ma'am," murmured John. "I remember one case."

"I hope she was hanged."

"Transported, ma'am, transported," said John thoughtfully.

"It was much too good for her," decided the lady.

"She was a mighty pretty wench," said John in a far-away voice. "She had brown hair and a very fine skin."

"Ha! The pretty ones are always the worst," commented the lady. "I would never engage such a minx."

At this point the toastmaster roared for silence and the health of the King was proposed by old Adams. After this the usual interminable speeches began in praise of the shipbuilders, the

owners, the new ship and, of course, the Honourable East India Company. In the course of the round of toasts it fell to John to arise and answer.

"Mr. Chairman, your ladyship, ladies and gentlemen," he began, "it is with the greatest pleasure that I address you on this auspicious occasion in reply to the toast of my ship the *Danae*. She is a fine ship, ladies and gentlemen, the fact that she has been built by Dawkins and Sawbridge is sufficient warrant for the excellence of her construction, the sweetness of her lines, and the quality of the materials of which she is constructed."

There was a round of applause, and Messrs. Dawkins and Sawbridge simpered self-consciously, while their designer nervously fingered his neckcloth. "I have been at this yard almost daily during her construction, and can state without fear of contradiction that she is the finest Indiaman for her size ever launched, and will I hope for many years be the brightest jewel in the Merchant Service and the envy of our dastardly foes, whose wretched flag no longer pollutes the air east of the Cape of Good Hope." (Terrific applause.)

John stepped back from his place, and stationed himself beside the mysterious curtain.

"Ladies and gentlemen, by the greatest good fortune I have secured the services of our sublime national artist Blenkinsop, from whose brush, equal to that of the noblest Dutch or Italian master, I have a magnificent portrait of the ship as she will appear when fully rigged."

Amidst clapping and cheers John flung back the curtain and revealed a very shiny oil-painting of a ship securely riveted in a cast-iron sea and passing what appeared to be an iceberg.

"Mr. Chairman, your ladyship, ladies and gentlemen, the *Danaë* under all plain sail off the South Foreland outward bound with the wind at sou' sou' east fresh," announced John with enormous pride.

Everyone craned forward to get a glimpse of the masterpiece and express his admiration.

"Mr. Chairman, your ladyship, ladies and gentlemen, I give you the *toast* of the originator of this magnificent ship. The artist, ladies and gentlemen, who conceived the fair curves of her hull and calculated the dimensions of her scantlings. An artist, ladies and gentlemen, worthy to be reckoned the equal of the great Blenkinsop, whose sublime painting is before you. I allude, as it is unnecessary to state, to Mr. Crabb, the designer of the *Danaë*. Mr. Crabb."

In the buzz of conversation which followed the drinking of the toast old Adams leant across to John.

"The damned painter swindled you, my boy," he whispered fiercely. "He has only drawn the ship in one position instead of the usual three."

At last the festivities came to an end, and John, somewhat elevated by the champagne, found himself in his coach beside his wife being jolted homewards. Georgina was talking about something, he did not know what, but he took no notice. He was still thinking of the launch.

" You are not attending," snapped Georgina.

" Yes, I was," answered John by force of habit. " I entirely agree with you."

" Nonsense, I was not giving an opinion," replied Georgina. " I was giving a description."

" A good launch," murmured John. " She took the water like a duck."

" That has no bearing on what I said," remarked Georgina acidly.

" The *Lord Warden* manned her yards ; I shall have to thank Williamson personally," continued John. " Her buttocks are magnificent."

" You're drunk ! " exclaimed Georgina. " How disgusting ! The very first time I met you you were in the same state. It's outrageous that a man in your position should be so beastly."

" Not at all," protested John. " I'm not at all drunk. I'm happy."

" I suppose you were happy the first time we met."

" No, I'm damned if I was," exclaimed John. " It was the dullest dinner I've ever attended. There was nothing to do except drink and listen to a pair of fools arguing about Julius Cæsar."

" Indeed ! " cried Georgina. " And so your high spirits burst out in a disgraceful scene in the hall when that wretched maid was being hauled off to prison."

" A pretty girl that," mused John.

" I noticed you ogling her at dinner," said Georgina tensely. " But then I could not believe the worst of you. Although she has been transported I dare say you have found other

servants to console you. I know very well this talk of going to Blackwall to see your ship is nonsense. My friends have warned me that all men are utterly unprincipled and will deceive the most loving wife who has presented them with pledges of their love. I have had a number of letters about your disgraceful behaviour in China, and how you used to support a wretched woman in Newgate. Do not attempt to deny it, Captain Adams. You are unmasked ! "

Having delivered herself of these words Georgina produced her handkerchief and sank back against the cushions."

"Letters, eh !" murmured John.

"Yes, letters signed 'Your Well Wisher,' " sobbed Georgina. "I would not believe them at first until I had taken them to some friends, and my dear sister Amelia had persuaded me they are true."

"China," said John thoughtfully.

"There is no need to repeat my words like a parrot even if you are drunk," snapped Georgina.

"Budge !" shouted John, bringing his hand down with a resounding slap on his knee.

"What ?" demanded Georgina. "You dare to say fudge ? "

"I said Budge and I meant it," answered John. "Yes, Budge, my former servant. He must go for another cruise in one of His Majesty's ships."

"Your former servant, indeed, then his information must be true," cried Georgina in a high-

pitched wail. "Oh ! To think that I should be wedded to such a libertine. How provident that my dear father should not be alive to know of my shame. I wonder you have the assurance to sit there in a drunken stupor. I demand to know the woman you visit every day."

"I have told you before and will tell you again that I visit Blackwall every day," answered John. "If you have doubts you can ask the coachman or any of the hands about the dockyard. As for keeping a woman, why should I when I am married ? "

"I don't believe you," sobbed Georgina.

"Very well, then, believe your friends and the excellent Budge," retorted John angrily. "I don't give a damn whether you believe me or not. If it comes to that I've only your word for it that Johnny is my son."

"Oh !" wailed Georgina speechless.

"Now I come to think of it I am not at all sure I trust your male friends," continued John. "Some of them have a nasty look about them, and I believe I've heard gossip . . . but then I don't listen to gossip."

"Do you dare suggest . . . ?" asked Georgina in a choking voice.

"I suggest nothing," replied John shortly. "I merely state that I have only your unsupported word. I don't know what it may be worth. Because you believe anonymous letters and the scandal of prattling old women it does not follow that I am so credulous."

"You are completely drunk to make such

outrageous remarks," cried Georgina. "To hint to a lady that her child is not legitimate!"

"Is it a sign of drunkenness to accuse your husband of adultery?" asked John coldly. "If not I fail to see that a counter-suggestion can be deemed proof. Either we are both drunk or both sober. If drunk, it does not matter what we say, if sober it is a case of the pot calling the kettle black in my opinion. Therefore, let us hear no more of this nonsense. I have been extremely lenient towards your absurd accusations, and am willing to overlook them altogether provided I can rest assured there will be no more hysterical recriminations. If I am nagged again in this ridiculous fashion I shall be angry and take severe measures."

Georgina was too surprised at this counter-attack to be able to think of any adequate comment. The coach trundled on through the City of London and John sank back into reveries. He wished he had invited the incomparable Blenkinsop and commissioned that artist to paint the launch, so that he would always be able to recapture the scene. They drove the rest of the way home in silence.

Once home John went at once to his study and pulled out the plans of the *Danaë*, which he had already studied a hundred times. He was lost in admiration of the thin black lines on the broad paper when there was a timid tap at the door.

"Come in," called John mechanically.

Georgina crept timidly into the room and sidled up to John's desk.

" My dear, I'm sorry . . ." she began.

" Say no more," interrupted John. " The incident is closed. We will continue to live in peace and harmony, as we have before. No doubt there have been faults on both sides, but marriage is an affair of reasoned compromise. Would you care to come to Blackwall with me to-morrow and see the lower masts stepped ? "

" I should be delighted," answered Georgina.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE East Indiaman *Danaë* lay anchored off Gravesend ready for her voyage to Madras and Calcutta. Her broad yellow side with its tier of red port lids and a black strake above her gleaming copper were reflected in the sluggish water as the flood swirled slowly in. Her yards, squared with mathematical precision, were manned by rows of sailors standing on them, while at each truck, over a hundred feet above the deck, a topman balanced. A boat was rowed swiftly from among the cluster of wherries along the shore, the oarsmen keeping a regular stroke in the naval manner. As she approached there was a flash of flame from the *Danaë* and the report of a gun, then one by one other guns added to the pyramid of white smoke which rose lazily in the calm as the salute was fired. At the gangway the boatswain solemnly piped as the boat shot alongside and Captain Adams came aboard to take charge of his command.

"Is the pilot on board, Mr. Chiffinch?" he asked the Chief Officer.

"Yes, sir."

"Inform him we will drop down with the first of the ebb."

"Aye, aye, sir."

John gave a rapid but searching glance round,

and then descended to his cabin, where he was met by his servant.

"There is a gentleman wishing to see you, sir."

"A passenger?" asked John.

"No, sir," answered the man. "He says he has important private business with you."

"Very well, send him aft."

Although the captain's, John's cabin was by no means luxurious and the accommodation was somewhat cramped by the presence of a twelve-pounder gun which was run out of the open port. The walls were only of canvas and could be rolled out of the way when clearing for action. However, there was a cot, a desk, and room for chest and personal belongings. While he was seeing that all was properly stowed there was a tap at the door and his servant announced Doctor Hill.

"What! Hill! I'm glad to see you!" cried John, seizing the Doctor's hand.

Hill, who looked miserable and a trifle shabby, returned the pressure.

"Adams, or rather sir, for God's sake give me a passage to India," said Hill mournfully. "My life is blasted."

"Sit down and have a drink," suggested John, and called his servant to bring wine and glasses.

Hill sat down on John's chest and sorrowfully sipped the excellent madeira which was given him.

"Why go to India?" asked John. "I thought you were settling down at Deal."

"I did settle, I spent all that I had settling," mourned the Doctor. "And now my life is

blasted. Would that I had stuck by the Company and never left the sea."

"I cannot give you a berth, I already have a surgeon," said John. "But I can give you letters which will get you one by the next convoy."

"Let me serve as an unpaid assistant," begged Hill. "I can always find a position in India."

"But why are you in such a hurry to go to India?" asked John.

"So that I can forget all about England," answered Hill.

There was another tap on the door and a midshipman poked his head in.

"The Chief Officer's compliments, sir, and there is a light air from the westward."

"Thank you," replied John. "My compliments to the Chief Officer, and inform him that if the wind increases he will weigh and stem the last of the flood."

"So you sail at once," said Hill, the moment the midshipman had gone. "I entreat you to take me."

"Have you got your dunnage aboard?" asked John.

"I have my scanty belongings in a trunk on deck."

"Well, for old times' sake I can't refuse you, Hill, but do let me know why you are in such a hurry to go."

Hill gave a hollow groan.

"Very well, sir," he sighed. "You are saving me over a hundred pounds and giving me the

chance of starting life anew, so "I suppose I must confess that I have been an utter fool. The fact of the matter is my wife has run away."

"Why?" asked John. "Did you beat her?"

"No, I did all I could to please her and improve her," protested Hill. "I corrected her errors of speech and vulgar accent. I supported your bastard and treated him as my own son. I did not even flog the child. Although I did not get many patients, and the ones I did seldom paid me, I managed to scrape along and give her a servant and occasional new clothes. We were married nearly a year ago."

"Is it as long as that?" exclaimed John. "Yes, I suppose it must be. This ship wasn't built in a day."

"At first she was anxious to please," continued the Doctor. "But as time went on she became impatient of my efforts to improve her. Of course, I never flattered myself she loved me, although I was madly in love with her. When she wanted anything I did my best to satisfy her, and always let her have her own way as far as it was in my power."

"That was a mistake," said John. "You should have been gentle, yet firm as in dealing with a crew. Why you ever married passes my understanding. You could have been far more comfortable if she had been your servant."

"I married because I have not your ruthless selfishness," answered Hill. "But I am willing to try aloud in public places that I was wrong and you were right. If anyone ever dares argue with

me I shall point to you as the shining example of the man of the age who means to win his way to wealth, comfort and position, no matter whom he crushes on the road, and who remains a likeable enough fellow all the same."

Again the midshipman knocked at the door and entered the cabin.

"The Chief Officer's compliments, sir, and there is wind enough now to stem the flood."

"My compliments to the Chief Officer, and desire him to bring the messenger to the capstan, cast off the yard-arm gaskets and have all ready for weighing and making all plain sail."

"She left me for a smuggler," continued the Doctor when they were again alone. "A man worth thousands of pounds, but as rough and uncouth as a foremast hand."

John rose and reached for his hat.

"Well, we must get under way, Hill," he said briskly, and then paused as though a sudden idea had occurred to him. "Apropos, do you mind giving me the name of that smuggler? I might be able to do some good business with him as a sort of connection of his wife's."

THE END